

Context for the Public Art Commission, March 2022

Longbridge Riverside, Farnham

Introduction

Farnham Town Council has received funding for a new public art installation through an application for Environmental Enhancement Section 106 monies in relation to the University for the Creative Arts (UCA).

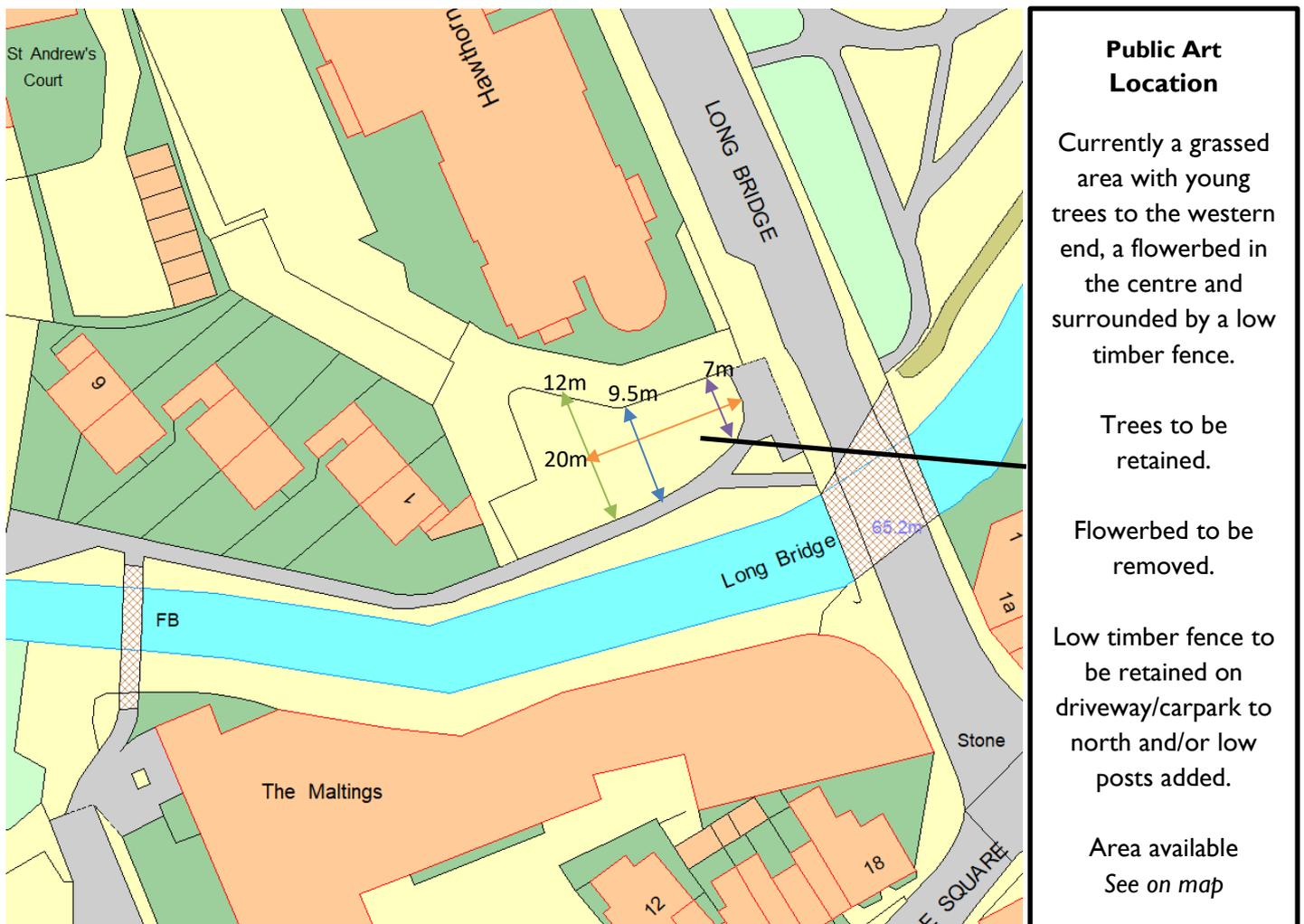
A project group has been formed with Farnham Town Council, University for the Creative Arts (UCA), Farnham Maltings, Farnham Public Art Trust. Other art specialists will assist on the selection panel.

Site Location

Farnham is in the southeast of England, and approximately 30 miles south-west of London with a population of nearly 40,000. The town is well connected in transportation terms with Farnham Station providing direct and regular services to London Waterloo, whilst by road, the A31, A3 and M3 are all easily accessible.

The new public art will be sited off Longbridge, a thoroughfare running north/south, an area adjoining the pedestrian Riverside Walk towards Farnham Maltings, close to the river Wey on the edge of the Farnham's Town Centre Conservation Area, adjacent Hawthorn Lodge retirement apartments. This location ties in with UCA students' use of the facilities at Farnham Maltings on an east/west pedestrian route.

Farnham has numerous public facilities and attractions within the town centre including Farnham Castle, Farnham Maltings, UCA, the Museum of Farnham, the New Ashgate Gallery, Leisure Centre and Brightwells Yard (opening 2022/3). Several green spaces in the town are located along the corridor of the river Wey.



Farnham's history

Farnham's history as a settlement goes back a long way. The discovery of stone tools in the area indicates that the first humans were here some 500,000 years ago. An Iron Age fort was found in Upper Hale and the remains of a Roman Villa dating from 300 AD were discovered near Farnham Hospital. The Romans prized the local clay for pottery making, and the tradition of pottery has continued to the present day.

The first documentary evidence of Farnham is in 688 AD in a Saxon land charter, but two later centuries are of particular importance. The 12th century saw the construction of a castle by the Bishop of Winchester as a convenient residence halfway between Winchester and London. In the 18th century, hop growing, brewing and malting brought wealth and prosperity to the town, heralding a new era of building, which resulted in a substantial number of Georgian additions to the Town Centre.

Much happened in the intervening years. In the 13th century the castle was captured by the French and held for several months; in the 14th century the Black Death killed large numbers of people; the wool trade brought prosperity in the medieval period and the town had a large and famous corn market. In the 17th century the Parliamentary forces took the castle, with a battle in Farnham Park; and from the 18th to the 20th century hop growing and beer making were the dominant industries. Following the arrival of the railway in the mid-19th century Farnham grew rapidly and enabled the residents to commute to London for work each day.

Today, the historic core of Farnham has a very special character, which includes over 500 buildings listed by the Secretary of State as being of special architectural or historic interest.

Farnham 'World Craft Town' Designation

In April 2020, the World Crafts Council designated Farnham as a World Craft City (Town), the first in England. From the University for the Creative Arts to exhibition, specialist retail outlets and craft-related businesses, Farnham is home to world renowned craft artists and to the next generation of emerging makers.

The roots of Farnham's engagement with craft can be dated back to the time when Farnham exported white clay to the Romans. In the 16th century, potteries in Farnham were major suppliers of pottery to London. But its real emergence as a town with a special leaning towards craft is in the Victorian era and the establishment and great success of The Farnham Pottery, Wrecclesham, with its reputation for the distinctive style of work known as Greenware (so called because of the copper-green glaze).

The establishment of The Farnham School of Art in 1880 strongly promoted the education in craft subjects as part of its curriculum, and a powerful reputation was developed that has lasted throughout the 20th century and to the present day especially in courses in textiles and ceramics. Craft courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels are offered at the University for the Creative Arts at Farnham, the successor institution to the Art School. Craft courses in jewellery, metalwork, glass as well as in textiles and ceramics offer today's emerging craft makers unrivalled opportunities in some of the best equipped studios and workshops in any specialist university in the country.

The opportunity to exhibit, sell and present contemporary crafts in Farnham is a significant feature of the town's creative programme. The emergence of the Farnham Maltings as an arts centre in the 1970s has been of especial importance to the cultural life of Farnham, and the crafts have very strongly featured in its contemporary programme: right at the heart of its diverse cultural offer. There are year-round exhibitions featuring young as well as world class craft makers. There is a particular focus on the craft fair, with an unrivalled series of events featuring everything from textiles to sugarcraft, drawing international audiences to the town and having a powerful and positive effect on the creative economy. Craft studios are established in the Farnham Maltings to sustain the craft infrastructure.

Craft across the centuries can be seen and researched from Farnham Greenware in the town's museum through to the unrivalled collections of the Crafts Study Centre. The New Ashgate Gallery offers a diverse range of craft work for sale and is especially focused on creating opportunities for emerging makers.

Looking at the Site



Looking west at the site from pavement on Longbridge

- Flowerbed to be removed
- Young trees to be retained
- Low fencing to be retained on driveway to right and parking area to rear and/or low posts added

Looking east at the site from Riverside Walk

- Trees to be retained
- Low fencing to be removed at path side
- Low fencing to be retained to the left along driveway and parking area



Looking southwest at the site - low fencing to be removed on path side (left), retained on driveway

Public Art Nearby

Public Art to the Southwest

The colourful interactive light installation on the footbridge. The lights change regularly, responding to the time and movement.

Riverside Railings incorporating motifs of corn, fern and barley, with hidden moth motif.



Public Art to South

These seven panels and two benches on the path facing the river Wey.

They were commissioned to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 by Farnham Maltings and Farnham Town Council to celebrate Farnham's rich history of craft making, and the writings of George Sturt and William Cobbett.



Public Art at Hawthorn Lodge to North
William Cobbett Statue and Three carved stone panels depicting aspects of Farnham's history (transferred from the wall of Farnham's Police Station previously on this site).



Looking out from the Site

Nearest Postcode GU9 7QP for street view

