

Ditchling Road Pocket Park

# Design and Access Statement

BH2022/03635 Land At Junction Of Ditchling Road And Prince's Crescent (Outside 1-11 Prince's Crescent)



For The Round Hill Society

March 2023

## Contents

1

- 1. Introduction and Context
- 2 Site and Setting
- 3 Design
- 4 Planting
- 5 Community consultation and engagement
- 6 Unauthorised pavement parking
- 7 Open space and green space
- 8 Heritage

## Figures

Figure 1. Clockwise from top-left: Round Hill Community Street Play on Mayo Road; Annual Round Hill Advent Windows; Round Hill Seasonal Community Carol Singing, Round Hill Community Clear-Up. ....4

Figure 2. Ariel view of site. Image courtesy of Google Earth. ....6

Figure 3. Existing site plan. ....6

Figure 4. View of the Site from Ditchling Road .....7

Figure 5. View of the Site from the junction with Round Hill Road .....7

Figure 6. Proposed Development Plan.....9

Figure 7. Illustrative Elevation of Proposed Development.....9

Figure 8. A raised-bed planter at the junction of Mayo and Richmond Roads in Round Hill, commended by the Royal Horticultural Society in 2021..... 10

Figure 9. (L) A Round Hill Green Spaces update on the online Round Hill Community Noticeboard and (R) a Round Hill Green Spaces article in the local quarterly print newsletter, The Round Hill Reporter.....13

Figure 10. Photos of pavement parking at the southbound Ditchling Road – Prince’s Road bus stop selected from a range of evidence provided by Round Hill residents between October 2020 and June 2021 ..... 15

Figure 11. Comments on pavement parking at the bus stop, excerpted from an August 2021 community discussion on the Round Hill Community Noticeboard. .... 17

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# 1. Introduction and Context

## Introduction

- 1.1 This Design and Access statement (DAS) is in support of a Full Planning Application BH2022/03635 for the development of a 'pocket park' public garden on the land at the junction of Ditchling Road and Prince's Crescent (Outside 1-11 Prince's Crescent).
- 1.2 The DAS is submitted at the request of the Case Officer.
- 1.3 The scope and level of detail are considered proportionate to the complexity of the application.

## Applicant

- 1.4 The applicant is Dominic Furlong on behalf of Round Hill Green Spaces, a community greening project under the auspices of the Round Hill Society residents' association.
- 1.5 The residents' association, The Round Hill Round Hill Society, has been established for 24 years and has strong track record of successfully co-ordinating and delivering a diverse range of community projects.
- 1.6 The activities of the Round Hill community encapsulate the concept of social and environmental sustainability that lie at the heart of the planning system. Activities include:
  - Community - Organising community funding for and planting of two new street trees organising regular Street Play dates, where a local road is closed to allow children to play street parties; cake and plant sales; jumble trails; dog shows; community clean ups; community carol signing; community advent windows.
  - Heritage - Participating in National Heritage Week.
  - Ecology and environment- -Toadwatch: Residents have registered a toad-crossing with Department for Transport and conduct seasonal toad and newt patrols; Open Gardens.
  - Education- Community library/book exchange.
  - Environmental monitoring- engaging in community liaison committees run by the Veolia Hollingdean Waste Transfer Station and the Hollingbury Golf Club.
  - Community safety- Petitioning the Council; liaising with our local team of PCSOs.
  - Health and wellbeing- We have worked with staff and service users of Change Grow Live, a substance misuse service located in Roundhill, to help clear and plant their garden. Change Grow Live allow us to hold our residents' meetings on its premises.



*Figure 1: (Clockwise from top-left) Round Hill Community Street Play on Mayo Road; Annual Round Hill Advent Windows; Round Hill Seasonal Community Carol Singing, Round Hill Community Clear-Up.*

### Proposed development

- 1.7 The proposed development consists of four moveable wooden planters.

### Purposes

- 1.8 Round Hill Green Spaces would like to develop the bus stop site into a pocket park for two main reasons:
- Pavement Parking: To make the walkway safer for pedestrians and bus stop users by deterring the escalating pavement parking problem on the site, which neither Sussex Police nor BHCC Parking Enforcement are able to prevent.
  - Public green space- Round Hill does not have any public green space and a pocket park on the sizeable, tarmacked walkway alongside the bus stop site would provide a welcoming green and social space at the north-west entrance to the area.

## 2 Site and Setting

- 2.1 Ditchling Road is a main radial route extending from the city centre and rising towards the South Downs. The road climbs steeply from The Level to the top of the Round Hill, levelling adjacent to the Site.
- 2.2 The lower stretch of Ditchling Road is lined with 19th Century detached and semi-detached villas.
- 2.3 Development along this stretch of the Ditchling Road comprises mainly two- and three-storey terraced houses with short front gardens, some of which have been converted into shops. The surrounding area is characterised by primarily mid to late 19th Century purpose-built terraced houses and commercial buildings.
- 2.4 The Site comprises a broadly triangular area of pavement extending to 220 square metres on the east side of Ditchling Road between Princes Crescent and Round Hill Road.
- 2.5 The Site contains no listed building or structures but is within a conservation area.
- 2.6 The pavement originally ran parallel to property boundaries. The original kerb stones remain in place. At some point in the 20th Century, the pavement was widened and the kerbs realigned. This narrowed the Ditchling Road and pinched the entrance to Prince's Crescent.
- 2.7 At some point, environmental improvements comprised tree planting, bollards, textured safety paving and raised speed tables paved in concrete setts or stone. This scheme is now somewhat degraded. Trees have been felled or removed; paving has been poorly reinstated after street works; and the tarmac surfaces include various patch repairs in contrasting tones.
- 2.8 The quality and appearance are further eroded by unauthorised pavement parking, which the street bollards fail to prevent. Some of the street bollards have been damaged and subsequently removed.
- 2.9 The site's environmental quality clearly detracts from the character and appearance of the conservation area, which amounts to minor or negligible/negative harm to the significance.
- 2.10 The Site today represents an opportunity for enhancement of the conservation area.
- 2.11 The Site is shown in the photos and map below: Figures 2 to 5.

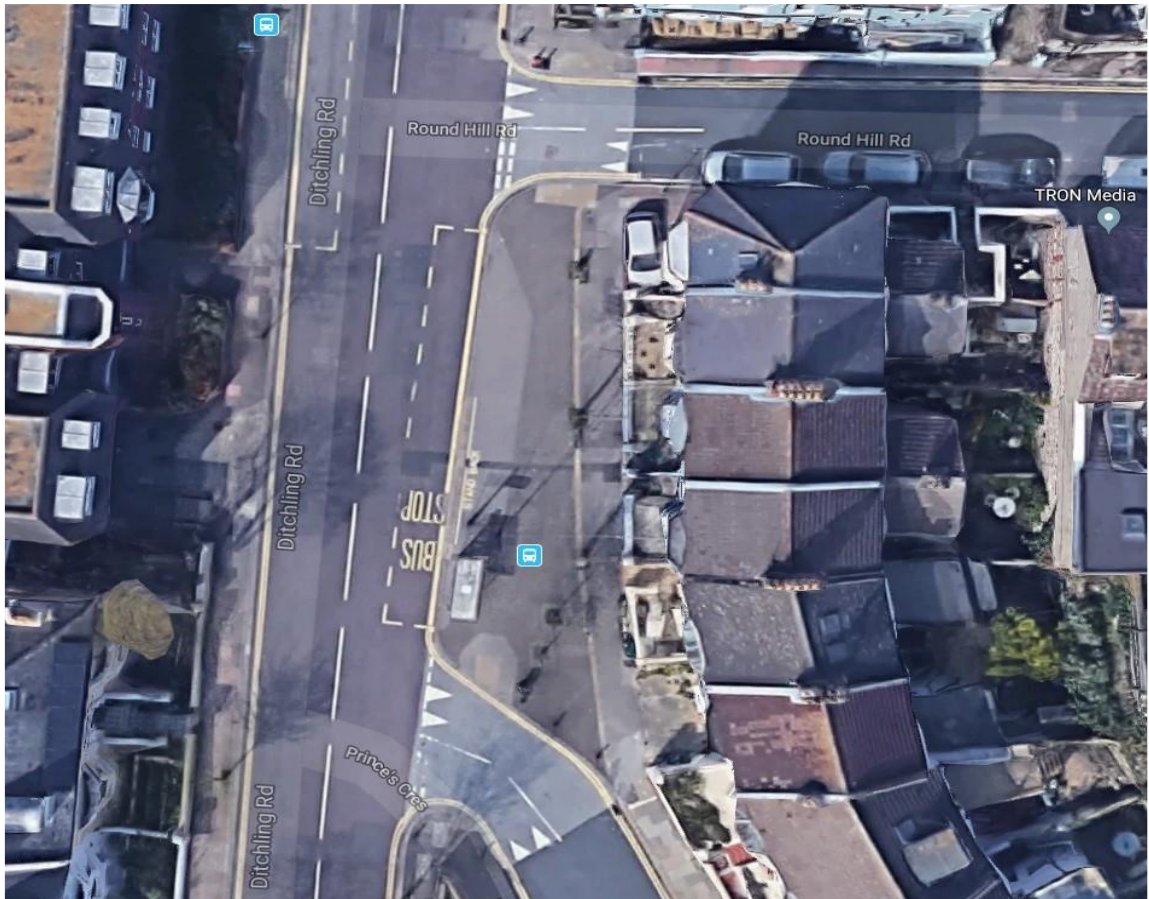


Figure 2: Ariel view of site. Image courtesy of Google Earth.



Figure 1: Existing site plan.





Figure 2: View of the Site from Ditchling Road



Figure 3. View of the Site from the junction with Round Hill Road

## Relevant Policy Documents

2.12 The following policy documents are relevant to this application:

### Planning Documents

- National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)
- Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 1 (March 2016)
- Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 2 (October 2022)
- SPD 11 Biodiversity and Nature Conservation (June 2022)
- SPD 16 Sustainable Drainage (October 2019)

### Other Relevant Documents

- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (February 2022)
- Brighton & Hove Draft Transport Plan #5 (September 2021)
- Brighton & Hove Streetscape Design Guidelines, First Edition (July 2010)

## 3 Design

### Amount

3.1 The Site is 220 square metres on which the proposed development is for four wooden planters, which vary in size from a minimum of 4.2 square metres to a maximum of 7.9 square metres. The proposed development on the Site will total approximately 23.3 square metres.

### Layout

- 3.2 The placement and orientation of the proposed development consisting of four wooden planters across the Site is detailed in Figure 6.
- 3.3 The layout detailed in Figure 6 was informed by a range of factors: (1) to limit the opportunity for pavement parking; (2) to create a pleasant green “pocket park” space for people to enjoy; (3) to maintain suitable access to and from the bus stop; (4) to keep clear of the desire lines used by pedestrians and residents of adjacent dwellings at 1-13 Prince’s Crescent; (5) to avoid utilities under the pavement; (6) to maintain sufficient distance from the two Sheffield bike stands, tree pits and other street furniture; and (7) to not obscure motorists’ and cyclists’ sight lines of pedestrians crossing the roads.





Figure 6: Proposed Development Plan.



Figure 7: Illustrative Elevation of Proposed Development.

## Scale

- 3.4 The scale of the proposed development is shown in Figure 7. The height, width and length of the proposed four planters have been carefully considered and are balanced in relation to the Site's existing buildings and surroundings. The proposed timber planters will not rise above 0.7m and cannot be described as prominent or intrusive by virtue of scale or height. Their contribution to the street environment and townscape setting will be limited to the immediate surroundings.

## Appearance

- 3.5 The proposed planters will be constructed from 'sleeper' timbers stacked one on top of the other.
- 3.6 The planters will have solid bases, supported by feet to adjust to site levels. This aspect of the design, informed by discussion at a site visit with council officers from City Parks - Owen McElroy and Rob Walker, will facilitate drainage and prolong the longevity of the planters by slowing down the degradation of the wooden bases.
- 3.7 It is envisaged the planters will look similar in appearance to the one created by Round Hill Green Spaces at junction of Richmond and Mayo Roads shown in photos below in Figure 8.



*Figure 8: A raised-bed planter at the junction of Mayo and Richmond Roads in Round Hill, commended by the Royal Horticultural Society in 2021.*

- 3.8 The design is an open green space, accessible to all – including users of wheels chairs and pushchairs and complements the existing natural features of the site -- four trees and a hillside view over the city.
- 3.9 Properly maintained, the planting within the planters will be the visually dominant feature, mainly because the planting schedule indicates that there will be variety and year-round colour.

### Access

- 3.10 The positioning of the four planters will maintain a width distance of at least 2 metres along the main walkways, sufficient to enable the passing of wheelchairs and double pushchairs.
- 3.11 The planters will help to prevent unauthorised pavement parking. This will ensure the pavements are not restricted for pedestrians and sight-lines at the Prince's Road and Belton Road crossings are maintained- enhancing road-user safety particularly for vulnerable road users such as young children walking to nearby schools.
- 3.12 The modular design and construction of the proposed planters will make them moveable if access to utilities under the walkway is required.

### Sustainability

- 3.13 The proposed development of four timber planters does not require any excavation or export of fill materials.
- 3.14 Locally-sourced, FSC Certified timber will be used, and reclaimed where possible.

The volume of the proposed planters will result in a modest attenuation of rainwater runoff into the drainage system and therefore provide a sustainable drainage measure.

## 4 Planting

### Approach to Plant selection

- 4.1 When Round Hill Green Spaces began discussing planting some years ago, we envisaged native hedges in the planters, with an underplanting of spring bulbs, native geraniums and so on. Experience has shown us, however, that this might not be appropriate for the entire open windy site. We trialled a few free hedge plants that we obtained from the Woodland Trust – those planted in open spaces generally didn't flourish. A small hedge we planted for a resident in their front garden just above the bus stop has thrived, but is slightly more sheltered.
- 4.2 Our experience, and in consultation with the Friends of the Lagoon, who have achieved a good planting scheme in the most challenging circumstances, has led us to amend our plans. We believe that lower-level hardy deciduous plants would be more successful for the row of planters nearest the roadside. We have successfully trialled such plants in the existing 5 planters that we maintain, gradually moving over to hardy deciduous plants and at the moment the plant list we have in mind would incorporate eryngium, nepeta, salvias, sedum, verbena (especially bonariensis), stachys, achilleas, geraniums and scabious; grasses to be trialled. We would supplement with wildflower seeds and spring bulbs. Our focus is a combination of hardiness, food and shelter for bees and insects.

- 4.3 We would like to trial a mixed native hedge of, for example, hawthorn, hazel, maple, guelder rose and wild privet, in the more sheltered area where small trees and proximity to the houses offer some protection. This would be monitored and changed if not successful. If successful, these would be pruned regularly. In general, we feel that once planted, regular maintenance will teach us more about what works in this location.

### Summary Plant Schedule

- Eryngium
- Nepeta
- Salvias
- Sedum
- Verbena (especially bonariensis)
- Stachys, achilleas
- Geraniums and scabious
- Grasses to be trialled
- Wildflower seeds
- Spring bulbs
- Mixed native hedge - for example, hawthorn, hazel, maple, guelder rose and wild privet, in the more sheltered area where small trees and proximity to the houses offer some protection.

### Plant Maintenance

- 4.4 We plan to meet weekly, rotating between Saturdays/Sundays/midweek to weed/plant/maintain involving as many adults and children as possible.
- 4.5 The existing 5 large planters in the area are currently maintained by Round Hill Green Spaces. Some time ago we appealed for volunteers to form a regular gardening “crew” for the bus stop plan, using our Facebook group, quarterly newsletter and via a presentation made at the Round Hill Society AGM. We have details of 15 residents who volunteered, though this may now have increased as there is a lot of local interest in our project.
- 4.6 One of the objectives of the Round Hill Green Spaces project is to reach and include socially isolated people in our community in local greening activities. We plan to engage all people from our community who could benefit from the project and encourage their participation via the channels that have worked well so far: the online Round Hill Community Noticeboard, the quarterly print newsletter, and community meetings and events.



## 5 Community consultation and engagement

- 5.1 Round Hill Green Spaces has consulted a wide variety of stakeholders about this project, using a variety of methods. This has informed issues of access and design of the proposed development in several ways.

### Local residents

- 5.2 Within the local Round Hill community, we've presented our ideas to the Round Hill Society committee in July 2019, and more widely to annual residents' association meetings in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. There is overwhelming community support in favour of some greening at the bus stop site in the form of some raised-bed planters and seating, and with residents voting to provide us with initial funding of £1,000.
- 5.3 Regular updates about the plans and progress towards the proposed development have been shared via the very active online Round Hill Community Noticeboard which has 700 members and via articles in the Round Hill Reporter, a quarterly print newsletter with a print run of a 1,000 which is delivered to every household within the area.



Figure 9: (L) A Round Hill Green Spaces update on the online Round Hill Community Noticeboard and (R) a Round Hill Green Spaces article in the local quarterly print newsletter, The Round Hill Reporter.

- 5.4 Plans have been discussed with residents of the dwellings adjacent to the Site, at 1-13 Prince's Crescent, in person through door-knocking. This provided an opportunity to allay most residents' concerns over design and access issues.

### Local press coverage

- 5.5 Plans for the proposed development were published in an article for Brighton & Hove News January 2023 which can be read by following this link:  
<https://www.brightonandhove news.org/2023/01/27/pocket-park-planned-to-tackle-pavement-parking/>

### Council officers

- 5.6 We've consulted with a variety of council officers and engaged in more than three years of discussions, Round Hill Green Spaces has hosted four separate site visits from council officers from various relevant departments: (1) November 2018 -- Simon Bannister, Communities, Equality, Third Sector Team; (2) August 2019 -- Robert Walker, Head of Operations BHCC City Parks; and (3) October 2019 -- Owen McElroy, Senior Project Manager Transport; and (4) January 2022 – Mark Prior, Assistant Director City Transport, David Parker and Len Holloway.

### Councillors

- 5.7 The proposed development for a pocket park at the bus stop has the support of our ward councillors, Pete West and Sue Shanks, who have contributed £2,000 to the project through their ward funds.

### Other stakeholders

- 5.8 We've also consulted with other stakeholders. These have included hosting site visits with representatives from Brighton & Hove Buses and Clear Channel; engagement as members with Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum; and consultation with the Stanford Avenue Community Garden Group. All these groups have supported our plan for a pocket park at the bus stop site.
- 5.9 Brighton & Hove Buses and Clear Channel and they support our plan for a pocket park at the bus stop site. We met with Martin Harris, former MD of Brighton & Hove Buses, and hosted Adrian Strange from Brighton & Hove Buses and Chris McClland from Clear Channel on a site visit to Round Hill. The outcome of our discussions was that Brighton & Hove Buses has promised us £1,500 towards the creation of a pocket park at the bus stop site if we are able to incorporate and green-roofed bus shelter. We have been in contact with the new MD at Brighton & Hove Buses, Ed Willis, who is aware of our project and has agreed to honour Martin's offer.
- 5.10 The proposed application for a pocket park forms one component of what local residents would like to see as part of a Low-Traffic/Liveable Neighbourhood roll-out for Round Hill. This is line with policies outlined in council's Active Travel priorities as detailed in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the draft Local Transport Plan #5, and the agreement by the ETS Co-Chair, Councillor Steve Davis, to explore the specific roll-out of a Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme for Round Hill at the January 2022 ETS Committee meeting in response to a deputation from Round Hill residents

## 6 Unauthorised pavement parking

- 6.1 Round Hill Green Spaces would like to develop the bus stop site into a pocket park make the walkway safer for pedestrians and bus stop users by deterring the escalating pavement parking problem on the site, which neither Sussex Police nor BHCC Parking Enforcement are able to prevent.

### Highway safety and vulnerable road users

- 6.2 Pavement parking makes the pedestrian walkway dangerous, with vehicles moving at speed on and off the site. On the online Round Hill Community Noticeboard several residents -- spanning all ages and physical abilities -- have reported narrowly avoiding being hit by moving vehicles while walking on the pavement at this site.

### Obstructing pedestrian access

- 6.3 Pedestrian access to the pavement is sometimes completely blocked by vehicles. Despite the site having a wide pavement in comparison with many roads which have bus stops, increasingly vehicles are often parked two-abreast on the site and/or parked across its north entrance. These occurrences completely block pedestrian access to the walkway and people are forced to walk out into the busy Ditchling Road in order to pass. The site provides a case study of how ‘turning a blind eye’ to the pavement parking problem has led to its escalation over time.



*Figure 10: Photos of pavement parking at the southbound Ditchling Road – Prince’s Road bus stop selected from a range of evidence provided by Round Hill residents between October 2020 and June 2021.*

### **Public transport**

- 6.4 Pavement parking has prevented bus drivers seeing if people are waiting at the bus stop. A number of Round Hill residents have reported buses not stopping when they were waiting at the bus stop because they couldn't be seen by bus drivers. The pavement parking of large vans on the pedestrian walkway often obscures bus drivers' sight line of the bus stop and the people waiting there.

### **Unauthorised parking displaces potential community uses and activities**

- 6.5 The site is adjacent to the popular Round Hill community pub and the local grocery shop, Shakti Stores, and is the main community bus stop for travel into the town centre. Many residents, however, report avoiding this walkway due to the problem with pavement parking. This pedestrian space could provide opportunities for people to have chance meetings, stop and chat, enhance their mental well-being, and broaden their social networks. In turn, these interactions would benefit the well-being of the community as a whole. The ongoing and increasing pavement parking problem at this site, however, diminishes the possibility of those interactions and the associated benefits for the community.

### **Community safety concerns**

- 6.6 Pavement parking at the bus stop is a frequent complaint on the online Round Hill Community Noticeboard and is widely condemned. The online Round Hill Community Noticeboard – which has around 700 members – provides clear evidence of the strong negative feeling among Round Hill residents towards pavement parking on the bus stop walkway. The latest discussion generated a large number of complaints in support of a frustrated resident who shared a photo which showed multiple vans and cars blocking the pavement alongside the bus stop that day. A selection of the comments from this community discussion, each from a different Round Hill resident, is shown in the box below.



“My 6 yr old was almost bumped into by a car reversing onto the pavement to park, they clearly hadn’t seen him and he wasn’t looking out for moving vehicles on the pavement. I also imagine they make things difficult for people with physical disabilities and the partially-sighted, who need to be able to read tactile markers (or the absence of them) to know what is coming up ahead.”

“Have been almost knocked into twice in recent weeks by these vehicles getting onto this pavement & I’m usually pretty alert. Happened last year with a ‘normal’ car. I’m not a fan at all of this ‘mixed’ space.”

“It’s a pavement and bus stop for PEDESTRIANS! And as such, it’s obviously anti-social, and in some cases no doubt dangerous, to have cars and vans driving on and off this pedestrian area. While I sympathise about parking problems within Round Hill, it’s a selfish and entitled justification for pavement parking.”

“It’s antisocial because it’s a misuse of public space, it disrespects others’ ability to use the space for what it was intended and unnecessarily clutters an already busy urban environment. Trades’ people should get a traders permit and park properly.

“I took a photograph the other day where someone started a second row of parking there. Outbloodyrageous. I’ve written to both the council and the police about it and neither have given a satisfactory answer...”

*Figure 11: Comments on pavement parking at the bus stop, excerpted from an August 2021 community discussion on the Round Hill Community Noticeboard.*

### Limited effectiveness of parking enforcement

- 6.7 Reporting the pavement parking problem at the Ditchling Road-Prince’s Crescent bus stop to Parking Enforcement at BHCC and to Sussex Police has had no impact. In recent years, many Round Hill residents have reported the pavement parking problem at bus stop to Parking Enforcement at Brighton & Hove City Council and Sussex Police. Neither set of actions has led to an improvement in the situation, and over time the volume and frequency of pavement parking at the site has increased. Our understanding is parking enforcement officers have no authority to issue fines once vehicles are parked on the wholly on the pavement, and police can only intervene if they themselves witness vehicles driving on the pavement. In this way, institutional responsibility for addressing the problem appears to “fall between two stools”. It is clear an alternative solution is needed.

## 7 Open space and green space

### Open space deficiency

- 7.1 Round Hill does not have any public green space. Nearby spaces lie across busy arterial roads. A pocket park on the sizeable, tarmacked walkway alongside the bus stop site would provide a welcoming green and social space at the north-west entrance to the area.
- 7.2 Round Hill Green Spaces -- the Round Hill community greening group, which operates under the auspices of the Round Hill Society residents' association -- have drawn up the plans for a pocket park at the bus stop site. The design is an open green space, accessible to all – including users of wheels chairs and pushchairs and makes use of the existing natural features of the site -- four trees and a hillside view over the city.

### 'Pocket Park'

- 7.3 The Site would be developed as a 'pocket park'. Pocket parks are considered to be small areas of inviting public green space where people can relax, exercise, socialise and play.
- 7.4 This would provide a small green space for the local community to enjoy, especially since Round Hill lacks any green public space. The location is at the entrance to the north-west side of Round Hill and so presents an opportunity to make a welcoming community space alongside the newly renovated and greened Round Hill pub.

### Social and community

- 7.5 A pocket park would offer opportunities to strengthen local social relationships and foster feelings of local belonging. The physical, social, and psychological benefits associated with creating and maintaining a pocket park would address the needs of particular groups within the Round Hill community: social isolation within the higher-than-average proportion of one-person and single-pensioner households; and high proportion of people living in flats in converted houses, many without garden access (MSOA data extracted for the area covered by the Round Hill residents' association from <https://brighton-hove.communityinsight.org/map/>).

### Air quality

- 7.6 A pocket park at the Site would make a small but positive contribution to improving air within the area. Round Hill is situated within a "red zone" of poor air quality, bordered to the east by Lewes Road and to the north by Hollingdean Road. These roads have been identified as amongst the worst in the city for high levels of nitrogen dioxide, which exceed national air quality standards and are associated with adverse impacts on health and wellbeing (2020 Air Quality Annual Status Report, Brighton & Hove City Council).

## Urban greening

- 7.7 A pocket park at the Site would make a positive contribution to the greening of our local environment and create habitats for wildlife. This is particularly important given the urban corridor of the South Downs Nature Improvement Area, as recognised in the Brighton and Hove City Plan Part 1, runs through the middle of the area served by the Round Hill residents' association.

## 8 Heritage

- 8.1 As detailed in the separate Heritage Statement which accompanies this planning application, the proposals will offer a minor enhancement of the conservation area that will partly offset the harm to the conservation area of the site's current condition. Less tangible but meaningful, the planting will give the impression of a place that is cared for and create an appropriate gateway' into the conservation area.
- 8.2 The proposed planters' low height and modest scale will minimise any heritage impacts. The proposed timber planters will not rise above 0.7m and cannot be described as prominent or intrusive by virtue of scale or height. Their contribution to the street environment and townscape setting will be limited to the immediate surroundings.
- 8.3 Properly maintained, the planting within the planters will be the visually dominant feature, mainly because the planting schedule indicates that there will be variety and year-round colour. The Round Hill Society has an established track record in managing the implementation and maintenance of street planters. This is likely to deter antisocial behaviour, graffiti, etc.
- 8.4 The scheme will use sympathetic contemporary materials of timber that would sit comfortably within the conservation area. The use of wood is appropriate with a link to the historic timber tram shelters that line Ditchling Road- evoking the journey from the city into the Downland.