

## 8.5 INTERPRETATION REPORT

# Marble Hill Revived Scheme Design Report

February 2017



Skellon  
Studio





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# Introduction

This Scheme document outlines our ideas for Marble Hill house, the garden and the wider park based on site meetings, workshops and a number of conversations with members of the client team and design team. This includes J&L Gibbons, the landscape designers and Acanthus Clews, the architects.

The ideas have been developed in conjunction with the client team's Content documents and a number of other reports including Access, Audience and Family interpretation.

The ideas have been developed with English Heritage's target audiences (Expression, Stimulation and Perspective) in mind, and will be developed in further stages through working with the community to integrate contemporary resonances throughout the project.

We hope you enjoy reading it and welcome your thoughts before we continue on to the next stage.



1752 survey plan of the garden.

# Writing as a Design Motif

Writing plays a key role in Marble Hill in a number of ways. Henrietta Howard's own letters are a great resource, containing an insight into her mind and relations, and some memorable lines. We think that Henrietta's line

“I must believe I am free”

in its paradoxical simplicity has an iconic quality that could define the whole project. Not only does it speak to Henrietta's own story, but evokes broader questions of the position of women in Georgian society. As well as Henrietta Howard's letters, the letter of Henrietta Hotham, Henrietta Senior's great-niece, which vividly describes her life at Marble Hill, is as sparky as they come, and could be the basis of a really fun part of the interpretation.

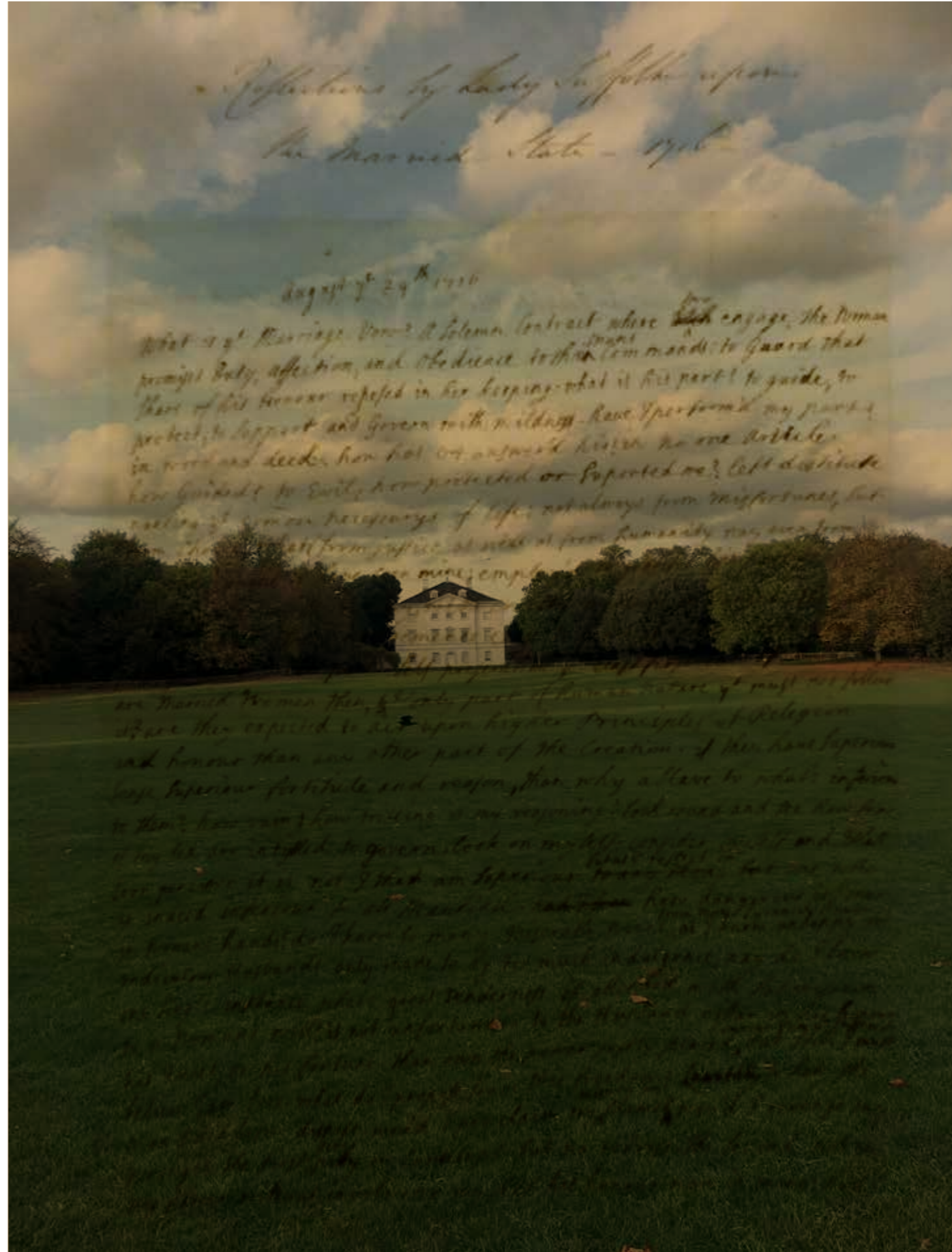
Then, within the paper records of the investments and ownership of the house, the inventories and other records, there are stories and histories we may read between the lines – of the running of a household, of lives of servants, of the links of British society to slavery – which brings another angle to the theme of freedom.

Importantly, this focus on writing extends throughout the grounds. As well as mentions of the park in Henrietta Hotham's letter, and poems and correspondence about dogs, the park is the only surviving example of a garden partly designed by Alexander Pope, putting into practice his poetic theories of gardening. In fact, a line of Pope's makes explicit the link between writing and plants:

“Words are like Leaves”

We think this is a wonderful starting point for developing a writerly motif through the park.

We are mindful to make the text accessible – providing transcripts of handwritten text, using text in limited amounts, using images to bring out the meaning of texts.





# Layers of Interpretation

Our aim is to weave interpretation into the park and into the house, linking the two together. We aim to draw park visitors into its restored features; draw their imaginations back three hundred years, into the stories of the people who lived there; draw them, ultimately, into the house.

In the house, we aim to foreground the atmosphere of the rooms, staging the sequence of the visit so visitors pause and see the house through a honed, anticipatory frame of mind. We aim to be subtle yet provocative – to catch visitors unawares. In both the park and the house, there will be three main approaches to interpretation:

**Evocative, embedded interventions** that link to key themes. Where appropriate, quotations and insights will be printed on tablecloths and adapted props in the house. We propose to use illustration across many of the elements from graphics, to interpretative installations and the AV providing a consistency through the graphic language. This might particularly appeal to Expression/Stimulation visitors as they are all visuo-spatial learners and need graphics with more than written text.

**Tactile and interactive interventions**, particularly aimed at families, Expression and Stimulation visitors. For example, in the house, Henrietta's hearing trumpet might play an audio recording in her bedroom; and in the garden, a cart will include games, and frames will recreate scenes within the landscape.

**Formal interpretation** sets the scene for each aspect of the park and house. Outside, this could be a limited number of traditional interpretative panels. Inside, this will be simple, lightweight elements that can sit on existing table tops. Complementary in style to the decor of the house and park, they would nonetheless stand out as contemporary pieces of display enabling visitors to seek them out and gain immediate insight. This kind of interpretation would be designed particularly with Perspective visitors in mind.





# Family Interpretation and Accessibility

## Family Interpretation

Families will be able to engage with Henrietta's story through a range of interactive and playful elements, bringing out the characters and dramas of her story. This will be a seamless offer across the house and gardens. In the garden the play space will support families aged 9 and under, whilst the in house interpretation will support families aged 7-11.

Upon arrival at the house families will be given a 'Henrietta's Guide to Etiquette' (title to be refined in consultation with user groups) resource which will provide them with engaging content to support family interaction as they explore the rooms of the house and key areas of the garden. The lively, tongue in cheek content will identify the difference between Henrietta's public and private life, allowing families to work together to uncover the secrets of Marble Hill house and the surrounding gardens. The resource will offer opportunities for hands on interaction within the property, and encourage incidents of play, exploration, whimsy and fun. The content may touch upon the letters produced by Henrietta under the guise of her dog commenting on etiquette at court.

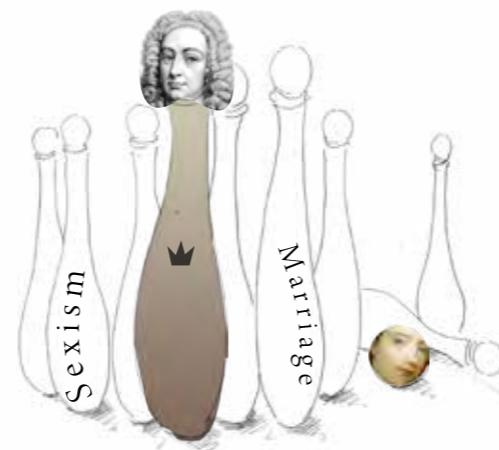
The guide will support further interpretative resources such as the use of illustration and AV, gaming tables that explore Marble Hill and Henrietta's life; and playful interpretation of Henrietta Hotham's letter in her bedroom, and a mobile cart including play equipment such as nine pin bowls in the garden. Throughout the house and park, heights of interpretation and legibility of text will be taken into account.



Visitor character cards at Eltham Palace.



Textured patterns and text could translate into motifs and interpretation inside the house.



Nine Pin Alley

## Accessibility

The entire interpretation will take into account the requirements of disabled visitors.

A range of approaches will be used to ensure the interpretation is inclusive to those with physical and sensory impairments and learning disability. For instance, AV material will be accompanied by British Sign Language captions and subtitles; tactile and audio displays will be included for the benefit of those with limited or no vision; graphics will provide an alternative to text to ensure access for those for whom text is a barrier, including BSL users, people with learning disability and overseas visitors.

Text will be in a legible font and size, well contrasted against its background.

Wheelchair-using visitors will enter the house via the front door. While this means wheelchair users will not enter via the same route as other visitors, the Introductory Room will still be accessible to them, and there will be duplicate information from the Introduction Room available in the Entrance Hall. Heights of interpretation will take into account wheelchair users and there will be 700mm recesses on interactive furniture.

Audio elements will be positioned to be audible by wheelchair users. Transcripts will also be available.

A virtual tour of inaccessible areas will be available on a tablet held by volunteers.

# Contemporary Resonance Projects

As part of the Activity Plan we will carry out three Contemporary Resonance Projects which will take the themes of Henrietta's life and find resonances in the lives of today's local community, with results incorporated into the interpretation:

## 1. Questions, Comfort and Marble Hill

This project explores Marble Hill's connections with trade routes and the accepted practices of enslavement which formed an integral part of these.

Using new research we will look at the investments and acquisitions which made Henrietta's house possible within the context of the time, and whether the slavery aspect was ever something questioned by people in her strata of society.

It will draw a line between this and our 'comfortable' acquisitions today. Do we ask questions about the things we buy which increase our comfort at a price we can afford? The project will look at modern day slavery and child labour, corporations which make use of cheap labour from abroad to bring cheap goods to us in the UK. Our artist will work with members of the community to draw these parallels and create an illustration (through livescribing or similar) to highlight the slavery connection at Marble Hill. The illustration will be included in a creative way within the interpretation.

## 2. A History of Sport and Memories at Marble Hill Park

There is evidence in her letters that Henrietta played sport. She knew the rules of cricket, and the 1752 plan shows a nine pin bowling alley waiting to be rediscovered beneath the Marble Hill turf.

Her involvement was just the beginning of an illustrious history of sport on the site which took off when the grounds were turned over to public use in 1902. We have references to tug of war and cricket games being played in the early years of the 20th century.

Using volunteers and recording equipment the project will begin by inviting accounts, reminiscences, records and photographs of activities at Marble Hill through a digital community collection event and using the outputs in the interpretation on site and through an off-site temporary exhibition.

## 3. Being Heard at Marble Hill.

We know Henrietta suffered from hearing loss from her late twenties or early thirties onwards, and this became progressively more pronounced. She used a tortoiseshell hearing trumpet, and found her loss of hearing limiting, even undergoing surgery to try to recover that elusive faculty, which she never recovered. This has resonance for our community today, where groups like the Twickenham Hearing Group still meet to share ways to access a world set up for those who can hear clearly.

Henrietta was known as a perceptive listener who was skilled at reading people and bringing them together for tea, gossip and entertainment. She was the centre of the Twickenham social scene, yet it must have been increasingly difficult to take part in the conversations which took place within Marble Hill.

This project will look at what deafness is like for those who love to converse; at its tendency to isolate those who cannot hear, and at the skills deaf people/users employ to become expert people-readers, and to take a full part in a hearing world. A composer will be commissioned to create audio with the community to be heard in the ear trumpet at the house, and also supervise a live performance.



# Marble Hill's Links to the Wider World

Marble Hill is connected to the wider world through objects housed within its walls, materials used in its construction and the finances which made its creation possible.

Like many of her contemporaries Henrietta consumed items from overseas. On-going research is beginning to shed light on the origins of some of the materials used to build Marble Hill. For example, some of the shells and coral which once adorned the grotto originated in the Caribbean and mahogany used throughout the house interiors was likely to have been harvested in slave-operated plantations in Central America. Other items would have been acquired from the Far East, such as hand painted Chinese wall paper in the Dining Room (no longer surviving but represented through a modern reproduction) or the lacquer screen in the Great Hall, which possibly came from Canton.

The cosmopolitan nature of Georgian tastes and aspirations, and their love for fine, exotic things, fuelled the development of overseas trading. However, the trading networks used to acquire some such items would also have been intimately entwined with Transatlantic enslavement. Although there is no evidence to suggest, for example, that Henrietta was a slave owner, she was part of an elite society riddled with many connections – direct and indirect - to the trade. These are also evident in financial investments.

It has been argued that Marble Hill could not have been built without the financial settlement from George II, which included £8,000 capital stock of the South Sea Company. This company, and the Compagnie des Indes which Henrietta also invested in, was actively engaged in the transatlantic slave trade. Further research hopes to better understand if these investments in trading companies helped fund the construction of Marble Hill, to what extent, and how directly Henrietta was involved in the management of her stocks.

We will embed these stories throughout the interpretation, through exploration of contemporary resonances, and working with the local community. This will include:

- AV in the Paper Room and an album in the hall exploring how Transatlantic enslavement linked to the creation of Marble Hill and the questions it raises for us today.
- Interpretation in the landscape relating to the theme, including in the grotto which was decorated with shells and coral from the Caribbean.
- Links throughout the interpretation in the house – for example on the fan relating to the mahogany of the stairs, doors and floors, and in the Breakfast room where we will display sugar.
- An exploration of the Transatlantic slave trade issues through the family resource, with talking points for families.
- Exploration of the story of Chinoiserie at Marble Hill using, for example, the lacquer screen in the Great Room and wall paper (reproduction) in the Dining Parlour





# The Park



# The Park: Thematic Overview

There will be a number of types of interpretation woven through the park:

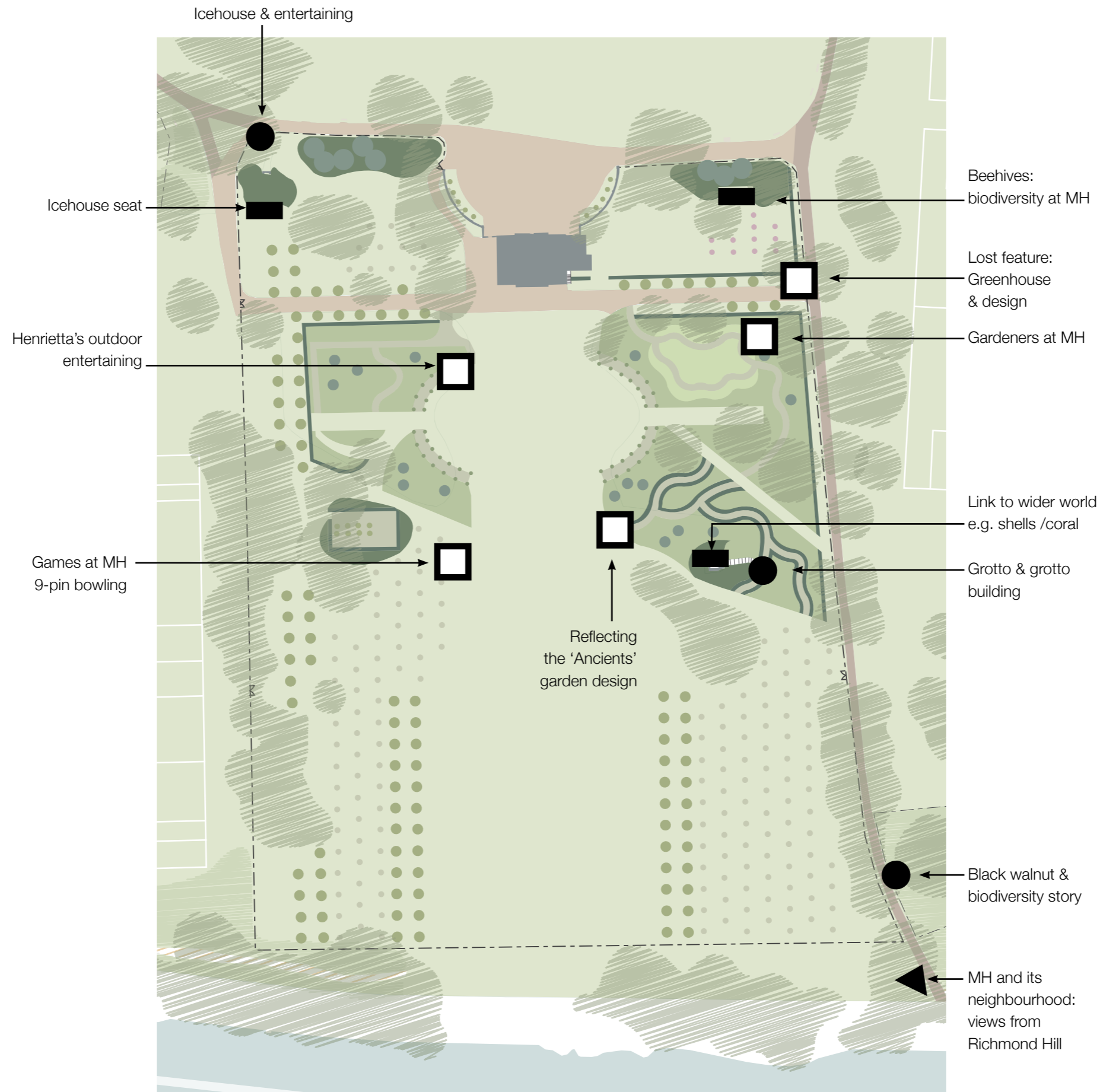
- Maps of the park
- Feature interpretation
- Embedded interpretation

This variety of interpretative interventions help orient visitors; give visitors an insight into its design, development and upkeep opportunities to spot ways into the park and life at Marble Hill.

All interpretative graphics will be designed with consideration of English Heritage standards. They are distinctive and complementary.



# The Park: Thematic Overview





# Map of the Park

At each of the four main entrances, there will be a map of the park. The map will orient visitors and include key information about what there is to see and do and unmissable highlights of a visit.

As well as this, the map provides an opportunity for interpretation, framing from the outset visitors' use of the park from a historical point of view. Using illustrations or details from paintings we could portray scenes from the life of Henrietta Howard, introducing the main protagonists in the story, and give historical insights into features and links to the global story. Through compass points, links to locations near and far would help make connections between Marble Hill and the rest of the world.

## Primary Target Audience:

- All segments have a relatively high score for 'I need just enough information to get me started'
- Perspective wish to follow their own path with clear directional signage and maps

## Welcome to Marble Hill House and Gardens

Henrietta Howard built Marble Hill as a retreat from court in 17XX. Once mistress of George II, here she became the centre of a unique creative social scene. Today Henrietta's park and house are open free of charge, with a wide variety of sporting facilities to enjoy.



Contemporaries of Henrietta taking tea in the garden at Hampton Court (Johann Zoffany, 1762)

### The Green House

Henrietta protected plants from the weather in her Green House, but it also contained sofas to sit with friends.

The large Green House was designed in the same Palladian style as Marble Hill House probably by its architect, Roger Morris. Letters show that Henrietta and friends enjoyed socialising here but was also a functional space where her gardeners cultivated delicate plants.

Sadly it was demolished by xxx in the early 20th century but traces remain underground.



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund





Kensington Palace, 8.6 miles  
Royal court where Henrietta served the Queen



Blicking Hall, Norfolk, 143 miles  
Henrietta's childhood home



The Caribbean 4000 miles  
Shells and coral for Marble Hill's grotto

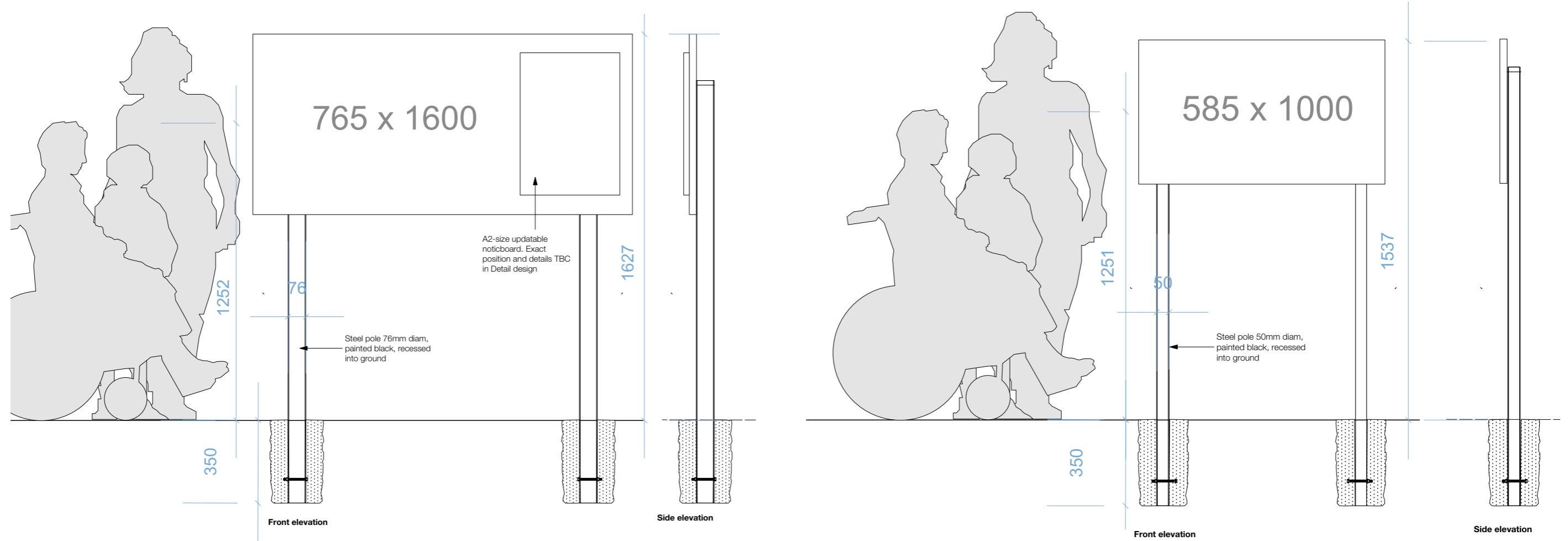
**Key**

- Play areas
- Sports
- Café
- Toilets
- Exits
- To be developed

Schematic design only

Please see [Graphics Document Page 61](#) for schematic design of panel layout





Map Panels, Large and Small – Schematic design



# Embedded Interpretation: Feature Panels

## Features Panels

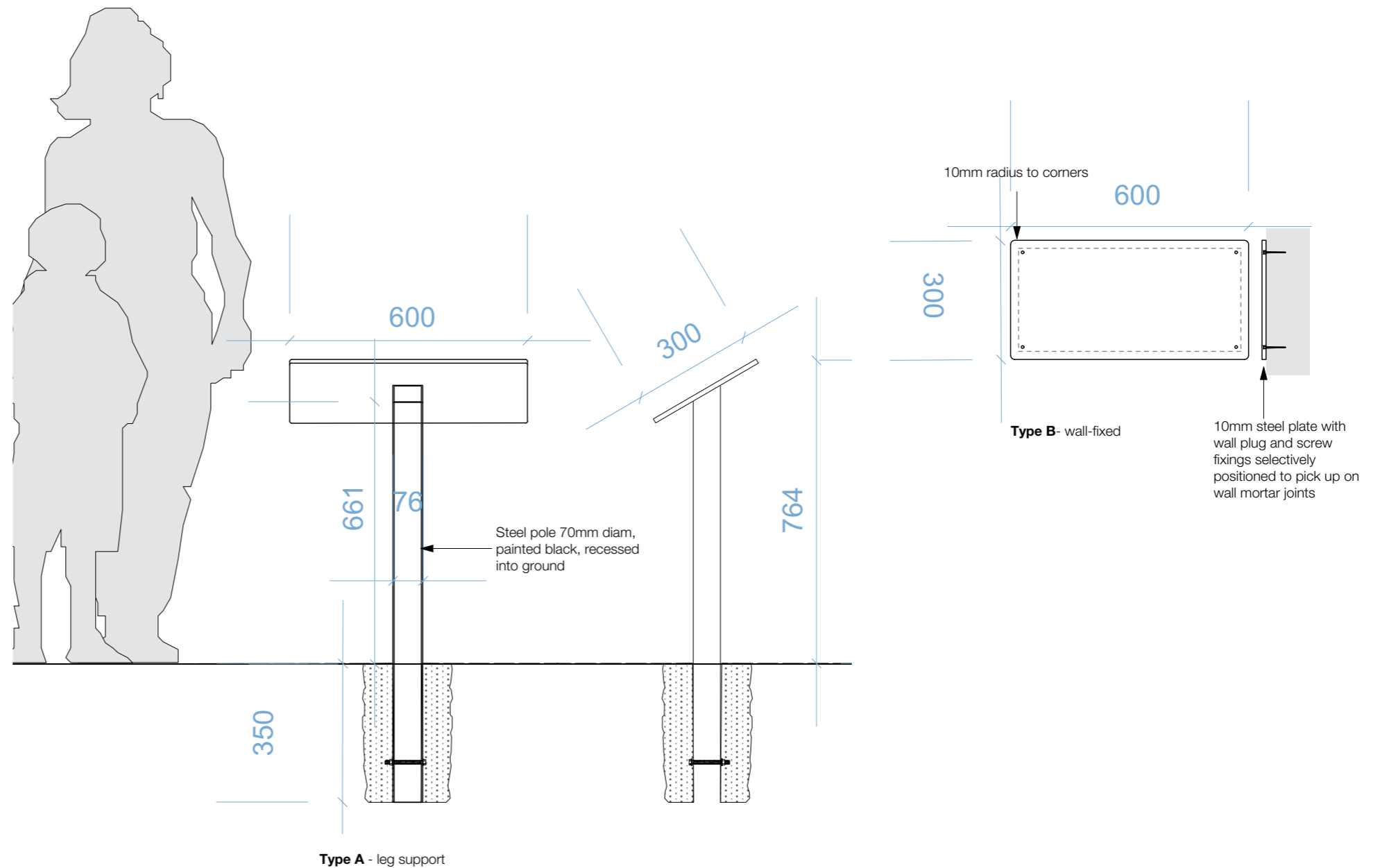
For features that cannot have fuller interpretative treatment, we suggest a simple panel can be used to give information. There are two types: one at waist height and angled to the reader, the other hung vertically on a wall or fixed to a fence.

These panels will cover features including the grotto, the icehouse, and the black walnut tree and associated biodiversity stories.

### Primary Target Audience:

- Perspective gain deeper insight

Please see [Graphics Document Page 62](#) for schematic design of panel layout



Feature Panel - Schematic drawing



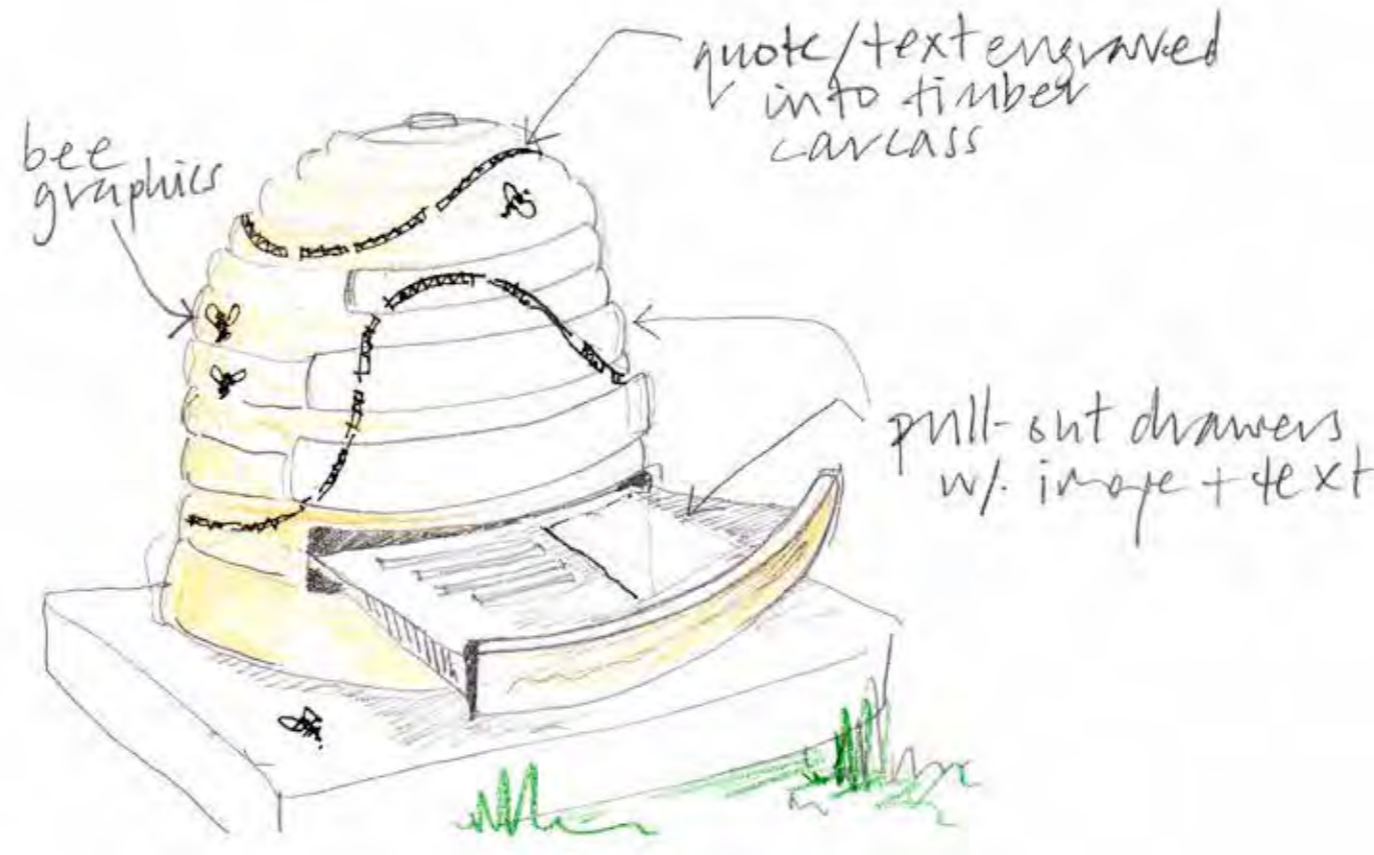
# Embedded Interpretation: Embedded Quotes

Quotes from Henrietta, Pope and other sources could be embedded in surprising places but perhaps also within 'play incidents' such as the beehive and icehouse seat.

These could intrigue visitors as to the story of the house and garden, and draw attention to the ideas that informed the design of the park and gardens.

## Primary Target Audience:

- Stimulation gain novel imaginative interventions
- Perspective gain opportunities for reflection
- Expression – respond to emotive entry-points to big ideas



“Words are like Leaves; and where they most abound,  
Much Fruit of Sense beneath is rarely found.”

“All gardening is landscape painting.  
Just like a landscape hung up.”

Alexander Pope

Indicative examples. For accessibility reasons, we would not be using upper case or italicised text.

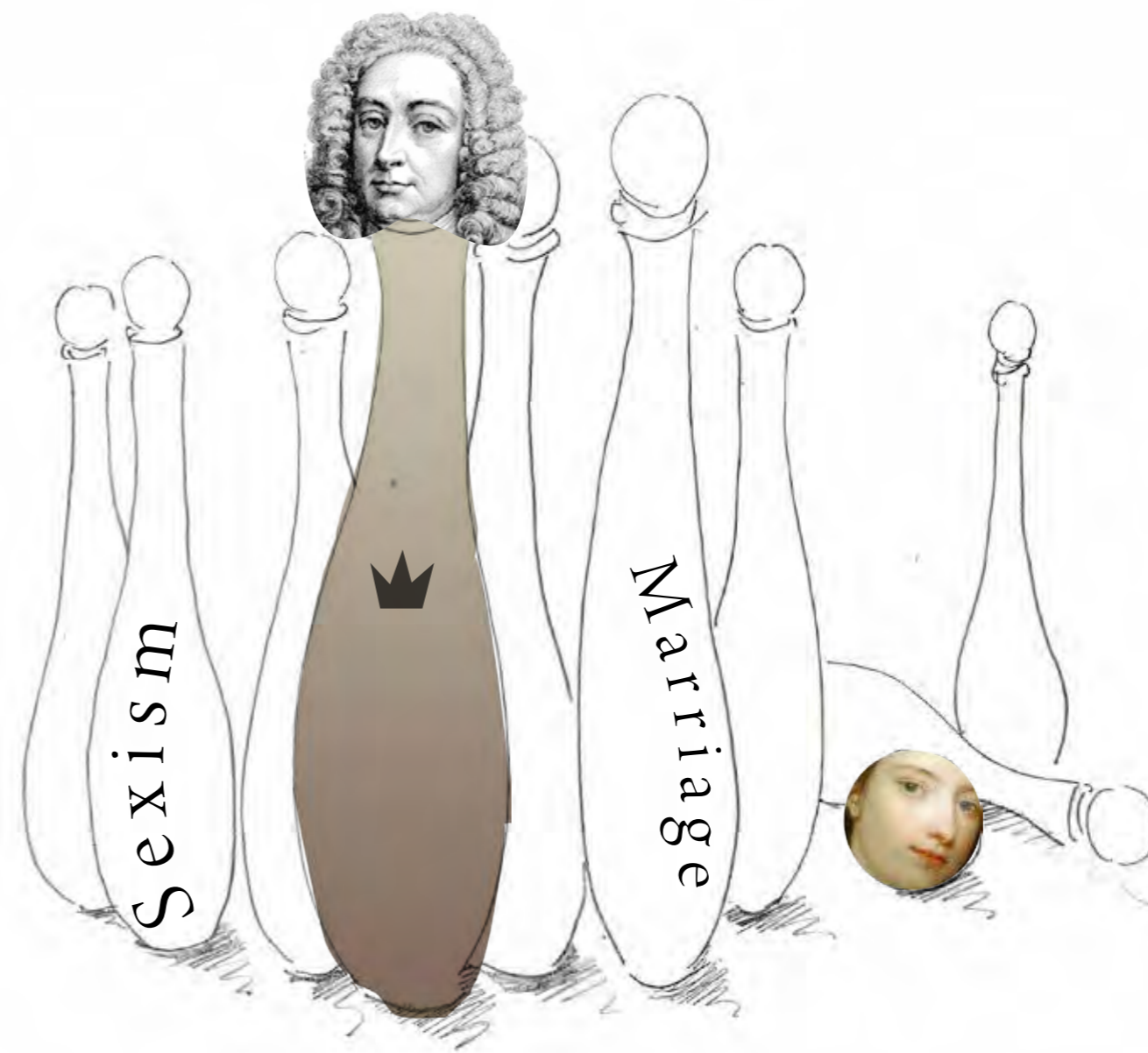
## Primary Target Audience:

- Expression gain talking points and insights
- Stimulation enjoy spectacle, searching out, novelty
- Perspective gain insights, reflection

## Feature Interpretation: Nine Pins

Play is an important theme within the park. As well as the surrounding sports pitches, the Nine Pin Alley in the restored formal garden will provide an opportunity for visitors to engage in an eighteenth century activity, and it provides a way into the story of Henrietta – where the Nine Pins are characters from her life, and she the ball who knocks them down. A ‘find out more’ note on the base could encourage people to enter the house to find out how she battled these adversities. The pins would be easy to maintain and replace – but might also be mass-producible and sold in the shop.

Heights of all play equipment and play-based interpretation will be considered for children and accessibility.



### Primary Target Audience:

- Expression get to join in collective fun activities
- Stimulation immersed into intriguing interpretation
- Families gain fun accessible ways in to story

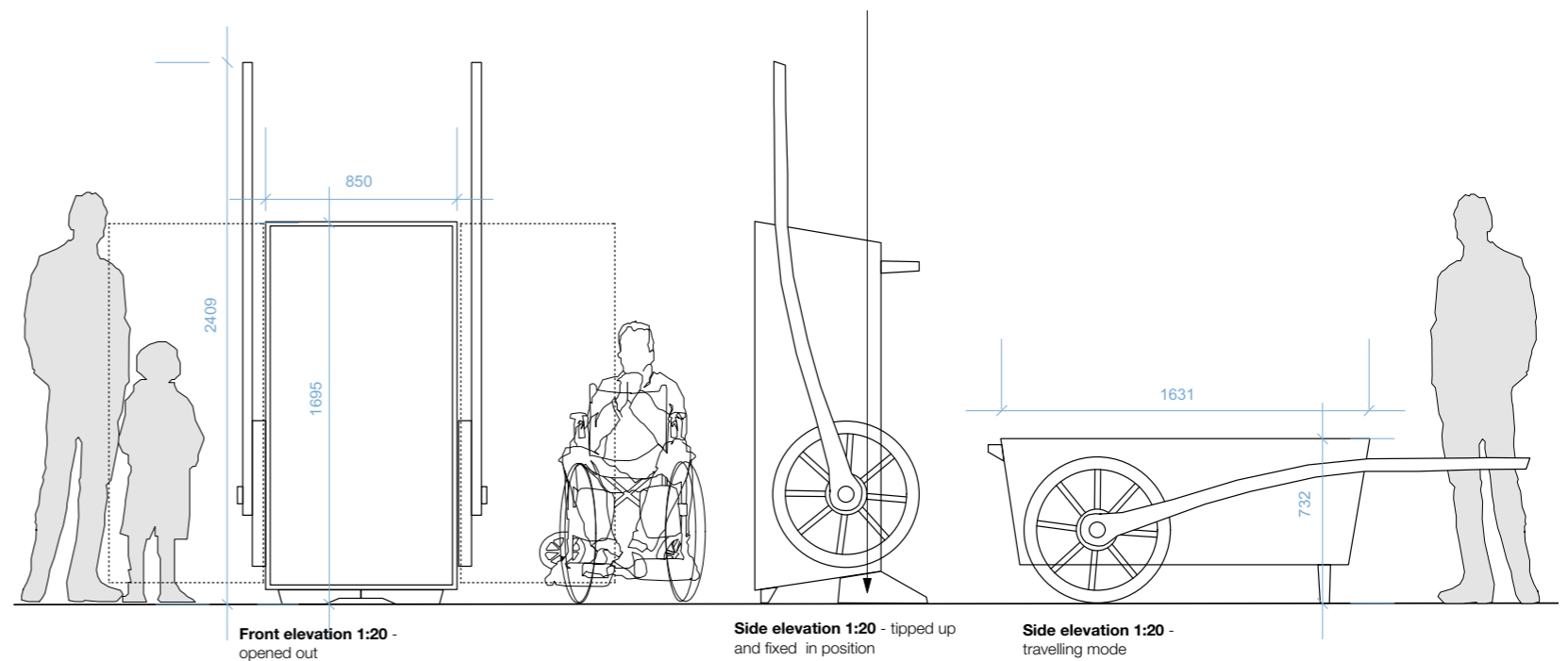
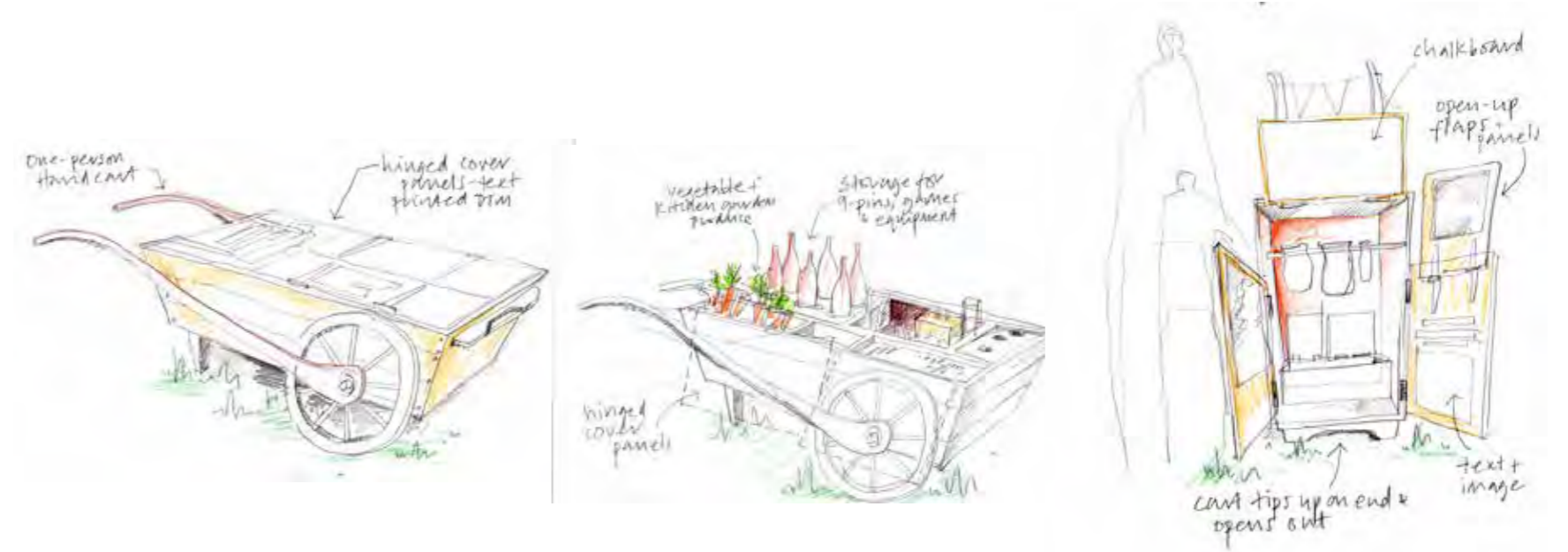




# Feature Interpretation: Hand Cart

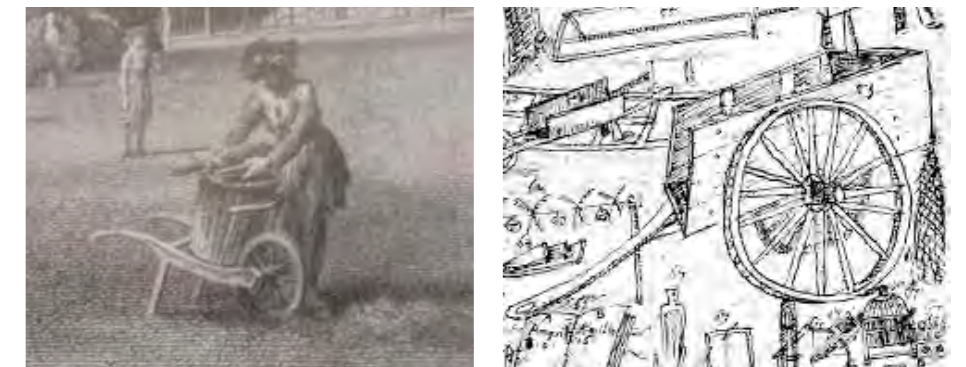
The Play theme can also be extended via a mobile hand cart that can be used to store and transport the nine pins and other Georgian era games. It could also contain information about the gardeners at Marble Hill and explain their work in looking after the garden and growing produce. The hand cart would be looked after by one or two family/play trained volunteers and brought out only when supervised. Once the hand cart is in position, it can be tipped up on its end and stabilised securely. The top panels would hinge open revealing internal graphics, displays and even a chalk board for everyday use. Once the equipment has been unloaded, internally-recessed drawers could be accessed to reveal seeds and tools used by the gardener.

Heights of all play equipment and play-based interpretation will be considered for children and accessibility.



## Primary Target Audience:

- Expression get to join in collective fun activities
- Stimulation – enjoy kinaesthetic and outdoor learning activities as a family. Families gain fun accessible ways in to story





# Embedded Interpretation: Illustrated Frames

To recreate scenes from Henrietta's day, frames could be positioned in key locations, showing illustrations of how the gardens would have been in the eighteenth century, with activities such as dinner on the lawn and the landscape of the gardens visible beyond.

Frames could also be used to draw attention to key aspects of the park design, and recreate Lost Landscape features such as the Greenhouse and Beehives.

The frames would be made of painted steel with enamel-baked illustrations, and would be of a height that works for families and wheelchair users. They would be positioned near paths to ensure the ground isn't worn. They will be carefully placed so as not to interrupt key historic vistas. Caption text positioned under the frame explains the captured image setting the scene for the particular story.

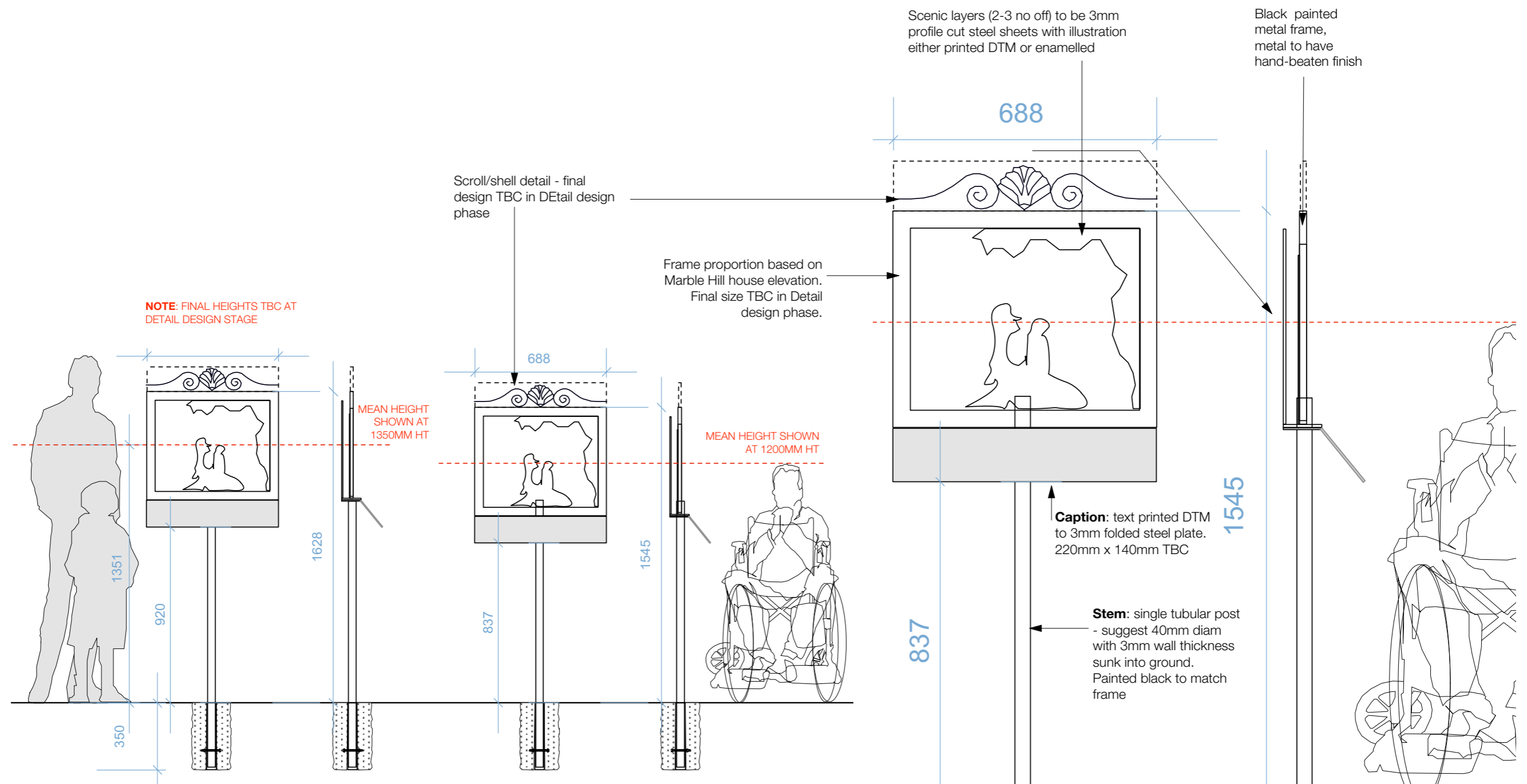


## Primary Target Audience:

- Stimulation – enjoy surprising juxtapositions and creative interventions
- All three groups are visuo-spatial learners and need graphics with more than written text

Please see [Graphics Document Page 63](#)  
for schematic design of panel layout





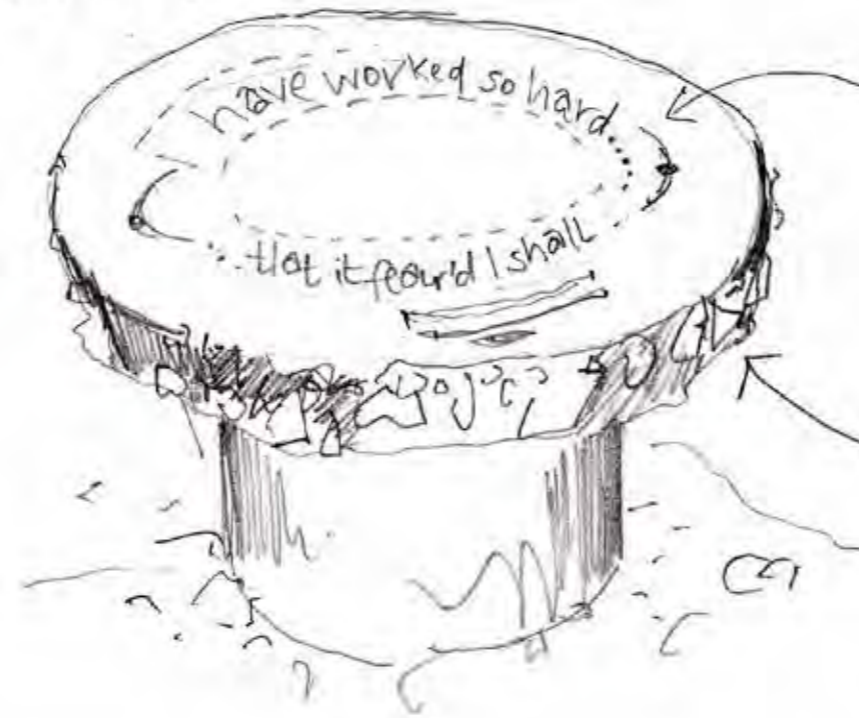
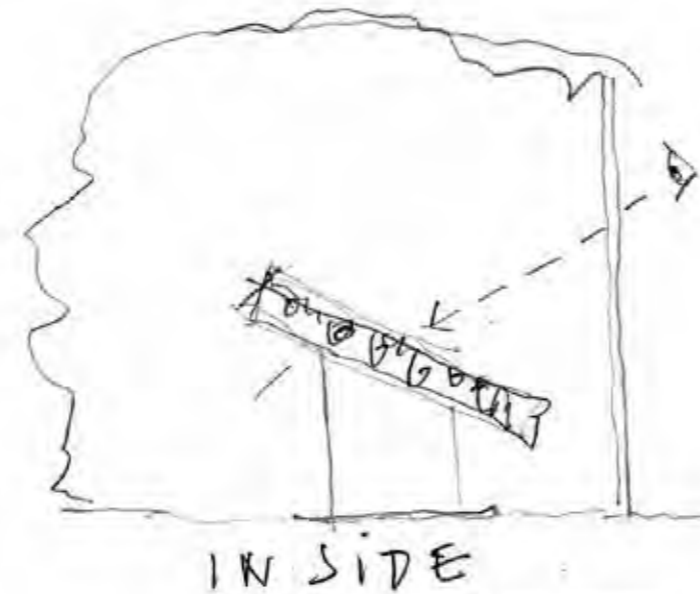
## Feature Interpretation: The Grotto

Subject to community consultation, the Grotto could feature a quote from Henrietta Hotham etched into a stone:

“I have work'd so hard in the Groto and Rock  
that it's fear'd I shall damage my fingers”

This could link to the story of how the shells and coral used may be part of the Transatlantic slavery story.

The interpretative structure would be designed to be mobile to allow for clear viewing access of the Grotto if required.



carved stone/terrazzo  
top w/- quote  
engraved

coloured ceramics,  
shells, minor edge  
detail



# Sports Block and Market Garden

In the area of the Sports Block, we propose a piece of interpretation that explores the sporting legacy of the park, and Henrietta's interests in sport – and cricket in particular.

There will also be a panel to tell the story of the Kitchen garden, and how it is replicated today in the Market Garden. We would also tell the story of the use of land at Marble Hill for allotments during World War II. These panels will include quotes from current park users gathered as part of our Community Resonance Projects.

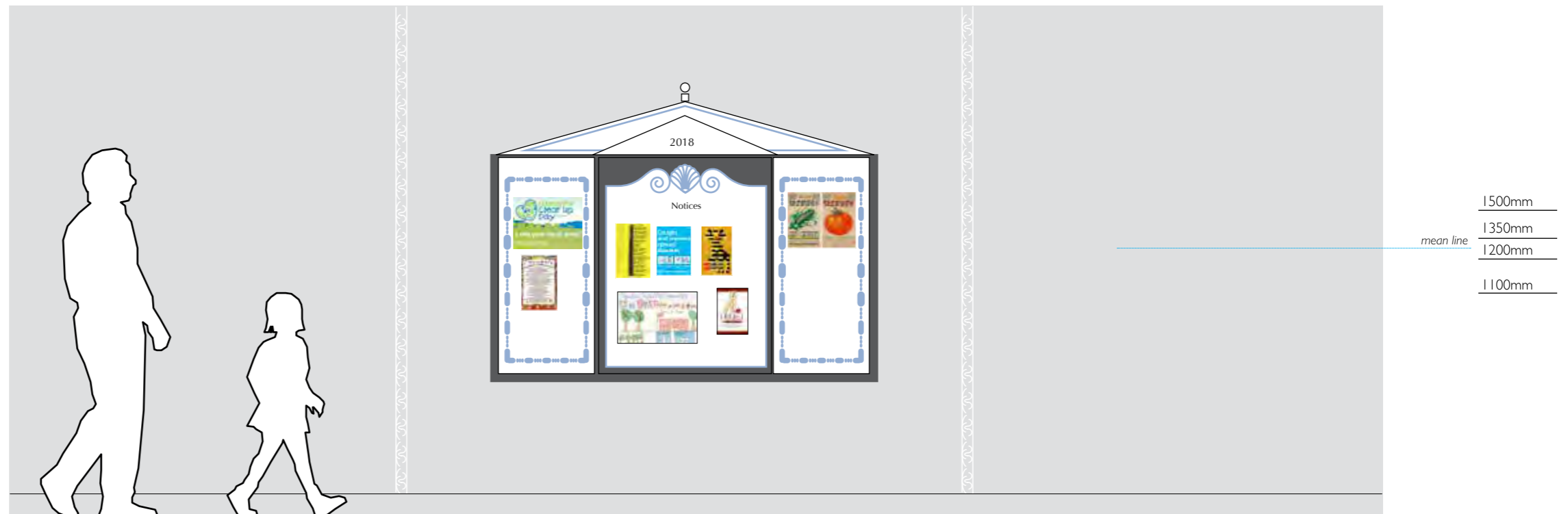
There will be a community noticeboard inside the Sports Block.

## Primary Target Audience:

- Expression – put social at the centre of their visit



Left to right: Community participants helping to create Poppies for the Tower display; Tower of Babel at the V&A; detail from a Grayson Perry vase.



The proportions could reflect those of Marble Hill, with decorative edging echoing the patterns of the ceramics and frames found at the house.

A Resonance Project could be invited to contribute to the design and fabrication.

# Play in the Landscape

The play opportunities at Marble Hill will be based around accurate representation of features that would have been in the parkland in the 18th century, with opportunities for play introduced creatively so as to inspire playful engagement from child visitors, drawing on English Heritage's recent innovative work at Battle Abbey. They will be dramatic and thrilling both as a visual and physical experience for visitors, whilst being sensitive to the historic location and constraints, and using natural and non-intrusive colours and materials wherever possible. They will embrace sensory, tactile and creative role play in keeping with the natural environment, and inspire curiosity and spark connection to the site, its heritage, people and stories. We will ensure that this area is accessible to children and adults with disabilities, and it will be suitable for unsupervised play provision (not staffed).

There will be two types of physically based play:

1. The clustered 'play area' – aka "parkland play zone" – in proximity to the Stable Block, targeting accompanied under nine year olds. This area was historically part of Henrietta's working estate, in a field called Marble Hold. We are considering inspiration based on this farm theme, and are developing the below:

- Sculptural, climbable cows, sheep and a dog (based on Henrietta's dog Fop).
- Haystacks, in evolution – building a haystack, inclusive of tools and incremental shapes and skeleton structures made of sticks.
- Landscape tools set – silhouettes or non mobile, either in a set or lying around on which to climb, including rake and broom, pitchfork and scythe.



Indicative design of the play area.

2. The 'interactive incidents' in the landscape, including building features, which are family friendly structures that allow for play as a means of reinterpreting lost features of the landscape, such as the icehouse seat and the nine pin bowling alley. These will be located on the footprint of lost historic features around Henrietta's garden. They will be suitable for ages up to 12 with age appropriate physical and imaginative challenges. They will inspire curiosity and spark connection to the site, its stories and people, as well as its history as a garden

- Ice house Seat – 2D solid frame in the shape of the Ice house seat, with rope arched wall to back made of rope as climbing structure.
- Recreation of Henrietta's beehives with graphics around the biodiversity of Marble Hill on pull out shelves.

These elements are covered by the Landscape play budget, and fall within the Landscape Architect's brief. There are other outdoor interpretative interventions, which will be developed in parallel by Skellon Studios (see page 14).

## Primary Target Audience:

- Expression – respond to emotive entry-points to big ideas