

The Netley Sculpture

The Site

A piece of land owned by Hound Parish Council, known as 'The Hard' was put forward as a potential location for a new focal sculpture. The piece of hard-standing sits south of Victoria Road, alongside the National Cycle Network Route 2 and the Southampton to Portsmouth England Coast Path route.



The Hard is currently used as a viewpoint by local residents and visitors to the area to look out over Southampton Water. As part of a village-wide project installing twenty war memorial benches, three were positioned in the centre of The Hard. A further three are positioned between the adjacent car park and the foreshore. Fourteen similar memorial benches are installed at Netley cricket field.



At The Hard there are also three bins, an information board about local history, a way marker for the Hamble Peninsula Trails and a plaque installed in the ground, commemorating one of Queen Victoria's visits to the nearby Military Hospital in the 19th Century.

In the past, The Hard accommodated a distinctive hexagonal radar tower. It is thought to have been removed in the 1950s/60s. This history is currently unrepresented at the site.



Red line identifies the site proposed for the sculpture.
Blue line identifies land owned by Hound Parish Council.



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The Artist

Artist Nick Hornby has been commissioned to design a new sculpture for Netley, using his site-specific approach of researching local history and consulting with residents.



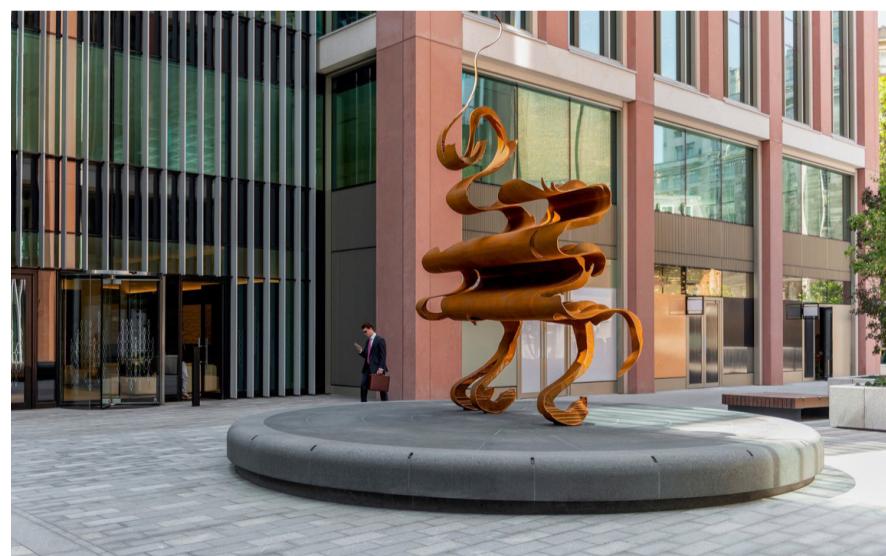
Nick was appointed through a competitive interview process with three established artists who have outstanding reputations for public sculpture.

Nick Hornby is a British artist based in London. He is a Fellow and Trustee of the Royal Society of Sculptors and has exhibited his work nationally and internationally including Tate Britain, the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge and The Museum of Arts and Design New York.

In November 2025 Hornby was appointed to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee to offer specialist advice on the development of UK coins and military medals.

Nick Hornby makes sculpture in a range of materials including contemporary products like Corten steel and resin, as well as more traditional marble and bronze.

In addition to sculptures shown in exhibitions and in private collections, Nick's public art has received great acclaim. In 2024 his sculpture titled 'Power over others is Weakness disguised as Strength', installed in Westminster won the public vote for the most popular new sculpture shortlisted for the Marsh Award for Excellence in Public Sculpture.



Find out more at
eastleigh.gov.uk/the-netley-sculpture



The Netley Sculpture

Process so far

Autumn/Winter 2023

The brief was prepared for the commission and approved by EBC's Public Art Steering Group for BHH.

9 December 2024

A draft contract was drawn up between Eastleigh Borough Council, Hound Parish Council and Nick Hornby. The contract commissioning a sculpture at The Hard was presented to Hound Parish Council and approved at their public Full Council meeting. The final contract was signed off by all parties in March 2025.

31 July 2025

Nick Hornby met with a group of residents at Malmesbury Court and held a public drop-in information gathering session. Nick presented his research, identifying possible imagery for the sculpture including plants, animals and historical figures with a local connection. There was a strong steer to focus on the local connection to Southampton Water and the Solent.

September 2025

The appointed Planning Officer gave a positive response to the pre-app with accompanying comments from a landscape consultant, stating that the Hard is an ideal site for a new landmark sculpture and that the site could benefit from redesigning. Following feedback, Nick prepared visuals showing options for how the existing benches or new seating could be incorporated at The Hard next to the proposed sculpture.

28 September 2023

The Local Area Committee for Bursledon, Hamble and Hound formally allocated funds for the Netley Sculpture in a public meeting.

Spring 2024

Five artists were invited to tender for the commission. Three were shortlisted for interview and invited to visit the site and prepare a presentation about their methodology and areas of interest.

Following interview, Nick Hornby was appointed for the Netley Sculpture commission.

June 2025

Nick Hornby commenced research into the local area and history, including a visit to the History Room at Netley Railway Station.

August 2025

Nick Hornby submitted a proposal to Eastleigh Borough Council and Hound Parish Council. EBC's Public Art Officer then submitted with a pre-application advice request to Eastleigh Borough Council's Planning team.

10 November 2025

Hound Parish Council reviewed Nick's sculpture proposal at their public meeting and asked for it to be shared with residents to gather public opinion.



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The Proposal

This sculpture would form part of Nick Hornby's 'Intersection' series, which merges multiple symbolic references into single sculptural forms. It responds specifically to the unique environmental, historical and social character of Netley, while engaging with local stories and public feedback gathered through consultation.

It seeks to create a meaningful new public landmark that reflects both the **local environment and collective imagination** of Netley residents – anchored in the landscape yet resonant beyond it.

The work meets all planning requirements for scale, material and access, and promises a legacy of quiet beauty, curiosity and dialogue for years to come.

Site Context and Viewing Angles

The design process began by assessing the physical specificity of the site, including:

- The available footprint (small, requiring spatial efficiency)
- Access and circulation needs (ensuring openness around the piece)
- Topography and sightlines from all four compass points

Key viewing positions:

- **Victoria Road (from the village):** A prominent side view, likely the first point of encounter
- **Victoria Country Park:** Reverse approach, with limited views until one is nearby due to slope and vegetation
- **View to sea (Sophie's Pond side):** Close-range frontal view
- **Southampton Water:** Distant view from the water, weather and light permitting



To respond to this complexity, the sculpture has been designed to function as a fully three-dimensional form offering interest from 360 degrees. To ensure visibility from Victoria Road and beyond the row of parked vehicles, the work will be elevated on a plinth and will reach a height of approximately 5 metres, creating a striking yet sympathetic landmark.



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Material Strategy

The proposed material is Corten steel, selected for its combination of:

- Structural capacity at scale
- Long-term durability with minimal maintenance
- Weather-resilience in a coastal context
- Aesthetic appropriateness to both natural and built surroundings
- Budget viability



Corten's weathered surface gives it a **warm, earthy patina, referencing rusted maritime structures and vernacular ironwork**, while its use in laser-cut sheet form speaks to contemporary fabrication methods. The material's duality – standing out and blending in – perfectly suits the intentions of this work.

Alternatives such as bronze, marble, resin or painted steel were assessed and rejected due to limitations in budget, maintenance and aesthetic harmony.



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The Concept

The concept has emerged through a balance of:

- Site-specific historical research
- Community input
- The artist's established methodology of combining figurative and abstract silhouettes to form a composite visual language

Initial research explored key historical and cultural narratives connected to the site:

Historical themes investigated:

- Netley Abbey: Cistercian monks, Jane Austen, Turner, Constable
- Netley Military Hospital: Florence Nightingale, Wilfred Owen, Queen Victoria
- Broader ideas of romanticism, institutional care, and spiritual retreat

Through public engagement it became clear that these narratives felt distant or impersonal to many locals. Instead, people expressed a strong affinity for:

- The sea and tides
- The weather and natural rhythms
- Netley's radar history and technological legacy
- A desire for contemporary expression over memorialisation

As a result, the final design proposes the intersection of two symbolic graphic forms:

1. A tidal graph representing the unique "four tides" of the Solent
2. A radar pattern generated from a simplified boat silhouette, referencing Netley's wartime history as well as the Hard's previous use as a radar station

These elements merge into a unified abstract sculptural form that remains open to interpretation, offering multiple readings across themes of time, perception, visibility and flow.

Access

The sculpture is designed to be:

- **Accessible:** No barriers, integrated into the landscape
- **Engaging:** Encouraging movement around it with changing visual experiences from each vantage point
- **Contemplative:** Offering a place for reflection, conversation and pause
- **Visible:** From nearby and far-off approaches, with lighting considerations to be developed at the technical design stage if required

By deliberately avoiding a commemorative figure or singular identity, the work welcomes all demographics - across gender, age, background - to engage equally.



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Seating and Landscaping

The Planning Officer has specified that an application for a sculpture at The Hard will require a detailed landscaping plan to demonstrate improvements to the quality of the area around the sculpture.

Considerations include:

- Provision of seating
- Retention of the Queen Victoria commemorative plaque
- Retention of wheelchair access to The Hard

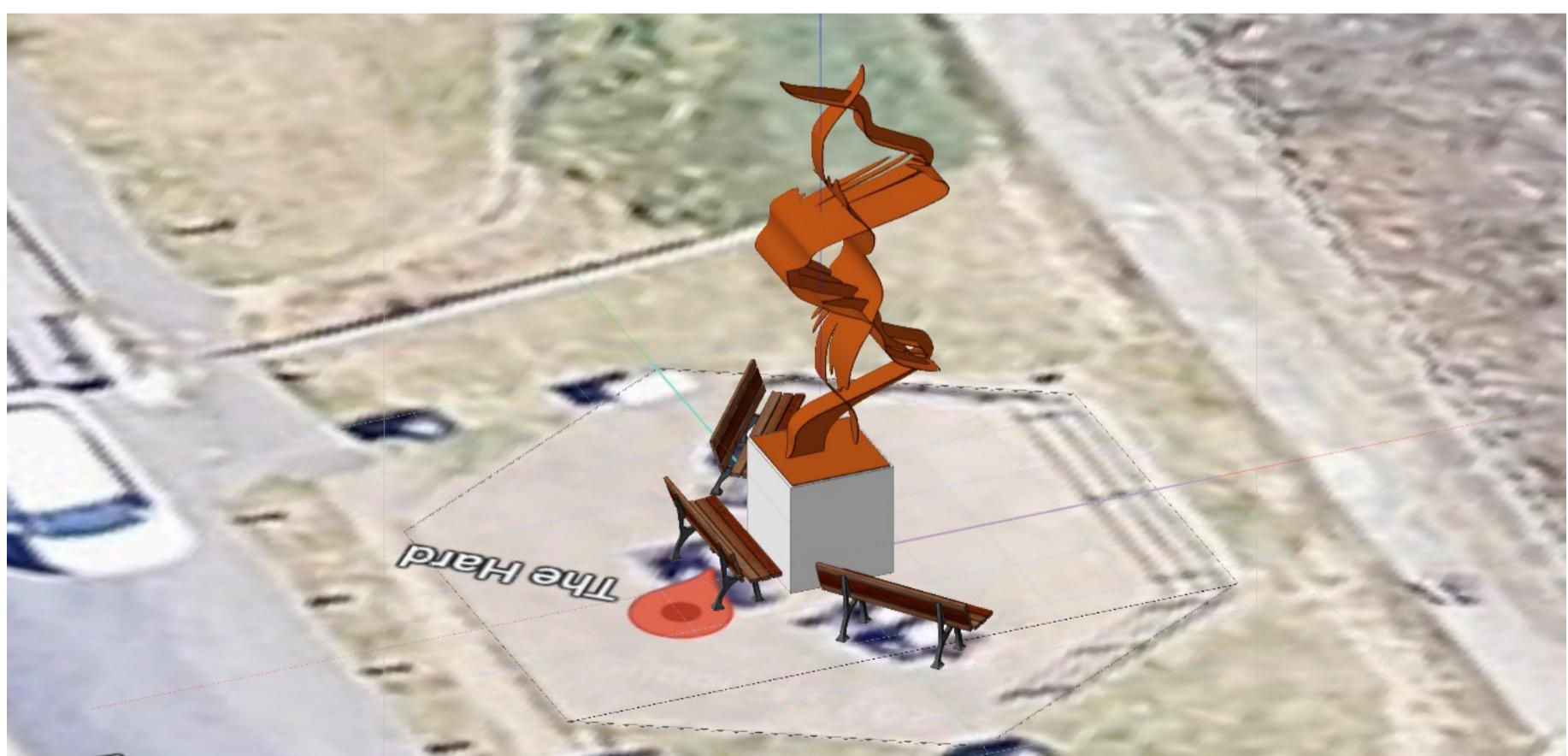
- Reduction in visual clutter
- Use of appropriate and complimentary materials
- Available budget

Additional Developer's Contributions are available in the local area, which could be allocated to cover the costs of landscaping improvements.

Nick Hornby has prepared visuals showing options for use of existing or new benches alongside the sculpture.

Option 1

This image shows that the current position of the benches and proposed central position of the sculpture are not complementary and would overcrowd the centre of The Hard.



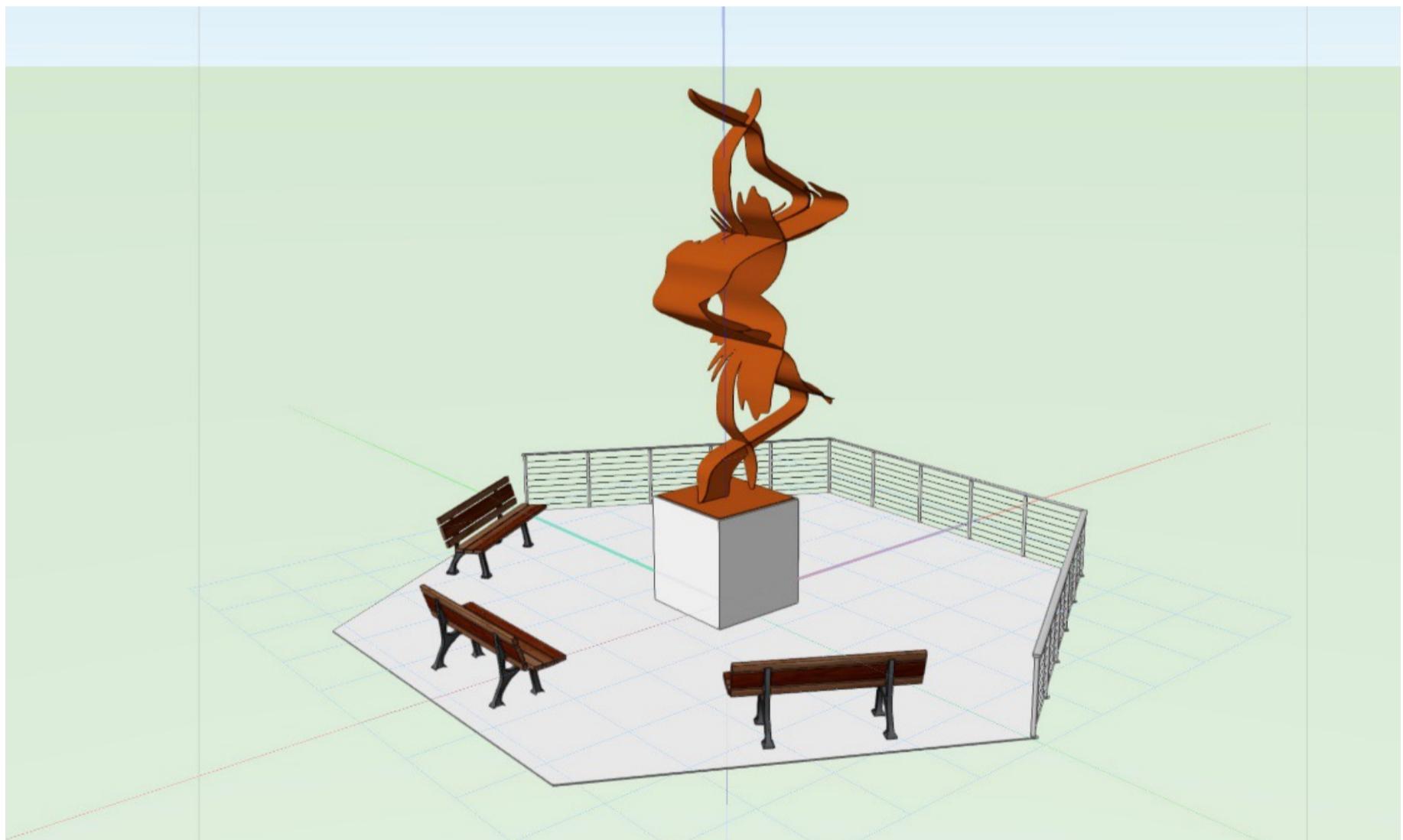
The Netley Sculpture

Option 2

The memorial benches or new traditional style benches could be repositioned at the edge of The Hard.

Keeping the memorial benches on The Hard would create a confusing clash of histories and narratives, detracting from each other.

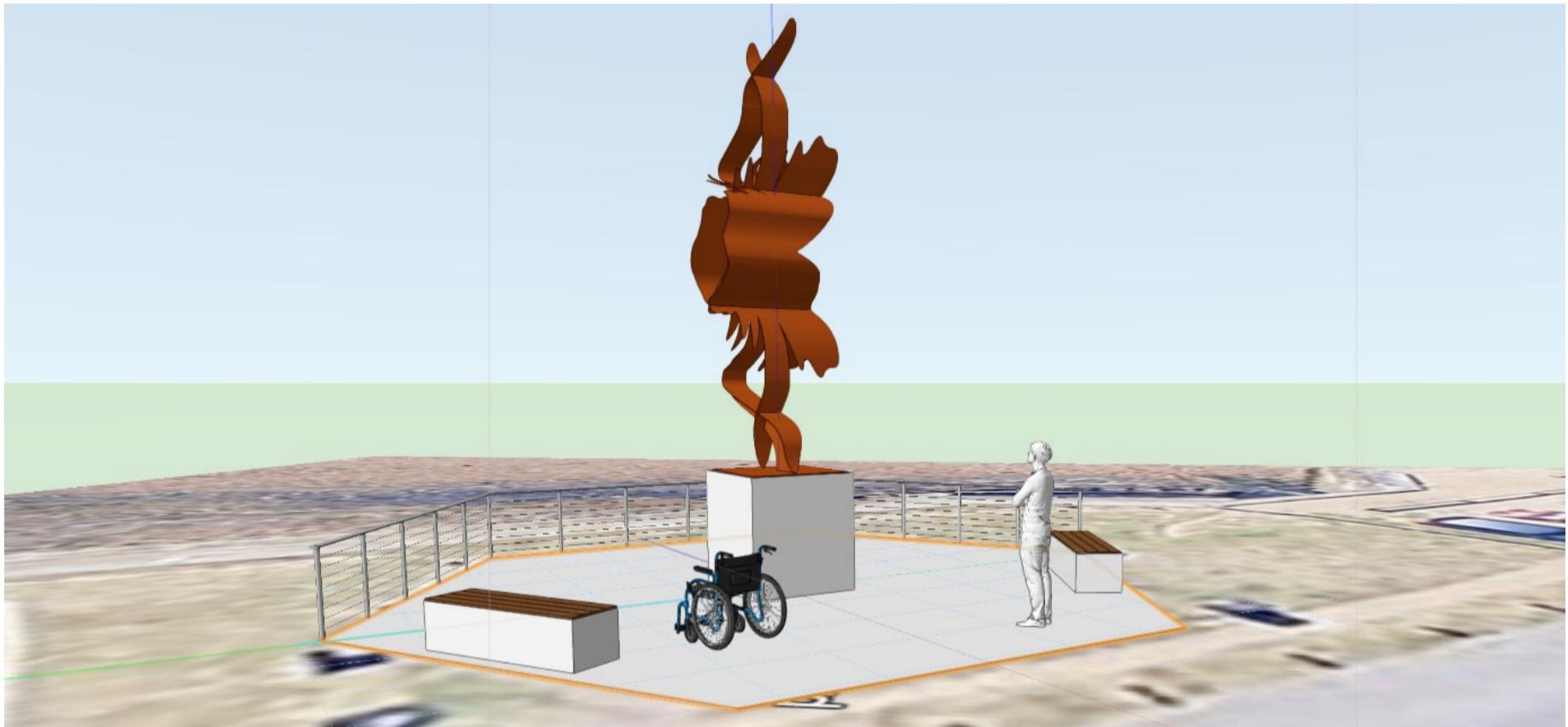
'Traditional' benches would be visually jarring as the style and materials oppose the contemporary aesthetics of the sculpture. Notably, the middle bench also becomes redundant as it has no view of Southampton Water and is too close to the sculpture to offer a good view of it. It also reduces space for users of mobility aids such as wheelchairs or scooters to access The Hard and view the sculpture from all sides.



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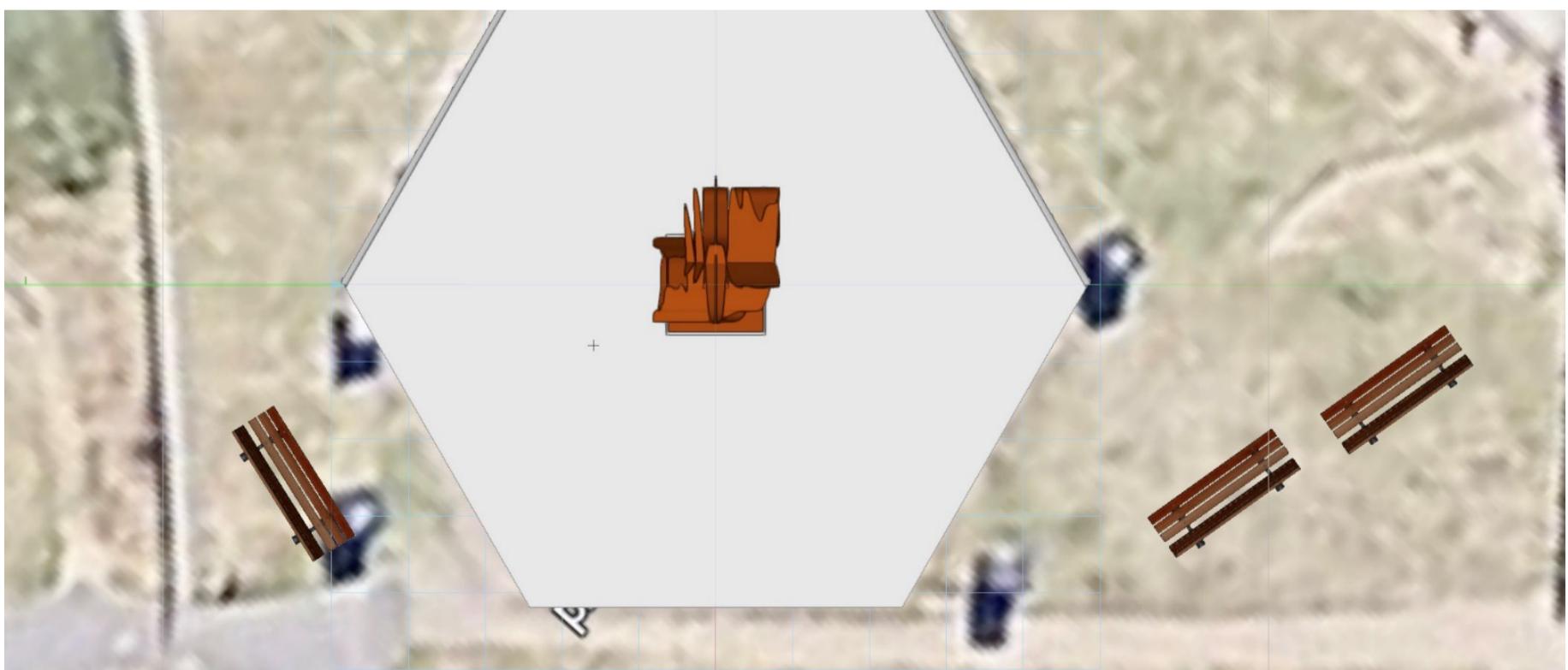
Option 3

Positioning two new contemporary benches at the edges of The Hard would create improved access for users of mobility aids and provide seating which has complementary aesthetics to the sculpture at minimal expense.



Option 4

As part of landscaping improvements, benches could be positioned further back from the sculpture, offering better views of the artwork and of Southampton Water.



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What happens next?

Delivery of the sculpture is subject to completion of the following stages in order:

- 1. Public consultation** – Comments will be collected at an in-person event and through an online survey. A report summarising the feedback will be shared with the artist, Eastleigh Borough Council and Hound Parish Council. Adjustments to the design may be recommended to the artist if there is clear consensus from the consultation.
- 2. Hound Parish Council (landowner) approval** – The public consultation report will be presented to the Council and if it is supportive of the proposal, a recommendation will be made to approve the design.
- 3. Technical design** – The artist will submit the detailed technical design for approval.
- 4. Landscaping plan** – A design for landscaping improvements will be prepared for Hound Parish Council's approval.
- 5. Planning application** – Formal planning consent will be sought from the Planning Authority.
- 6. Production and Installation** – The sculpture will be fabricated. Installation will be planned in consultation with all necessary stakeholders including Hampshire County Council's Highways and Country Parks departments.

Share your comments

Please share your comments on The Netley Sculpture by either:

- completing a printed survey and returning it at the in-person consultation event or by delivering it to the Hound Parish Council Office or;
- completing an online survey by scanning this QR code or visiting: eastleighboroughcouncil.citizenspace.com/public-art/netley-sculpture-consultation

