



Princess Gardens, Torquay

Masterplan Report

April 2017 16139 - RT01

www.lhc.net



Prepared by LHC on behalf of Torbay Council

Date: 03rd April 2017

Project: Princess Gardens, Torquay | 16139 - RT01

Produced by: D.E / J.H

Date: 03rd April 2017

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Date: 03rd April 2017





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1.0 Introduction



1.0 Introduction

Princess Gardens and Royal Terrace Gardens are a group of late C19 seafront public gardens and picturesque terraced cliff walks which are registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by English Heritage for their special historic interest. The gardens are also located within Torquay Harbour and Belgravia Conservation Areas.

The gardens are currently included on Historic England's risk register. The condition of the gardens is assessed as 'generally satisfactory, with significant localised problems'. The risk of change as a result of nearby development is identified.

A previous scheme for Royal Terrace Gardens has been completed and a management plan is in place. The main focus for the Masterplan and Conservation Management Plan is to be Princess Gardens and the Sunken Gardens.

Torbay Council own and maintain the gardens and would like to commission a landscape architect to prepare a Landscape Masterplan and Conservation Management Plan for the gardens.

Location of Study Area

Princess Gardens is located on reclaimed land to the foot of Waldon Hill, west of the harbour. Torquay Harbour is the historic hub of the town from which its growth a resort began in the early 19th century. The gardens extend from Rock Walk, a footpath running along the top of Waldon Hill, down to the seafront promenade. From the Abbey Sands mixed use development the registered gardens extend along the waterfront past Princess Theatre as far as the Grade II listed Pavilion, adjacent to the Old Harbour.

The gardens span the Belgravia and Torquay Harbour Conservation Areas and are well placed to form an important connection between the commercial centre of Torquay to the north-east and Torre Abbey Gardens and Torquay Station in the west.

Approach

The purpose of the Princess Gardens Masterplan report is to provide guidance setting out the key features and principles in order to achieve the restoration and a financially sustainable future for Princess Gardens.

This Masterplan has been prepared in consultation with stakeholders from Torbay Council, Historic England and Devon Gardens Trust through a comprehensive review of baseline information, site and context appraisal, visual appraisal including key views, existing trees and other planting, existing furniture and paving, etc.

Through the appraisal process Character Areas within Princess Gardens have been identified, including an assessment of key features, historic significance and potential to accommodate change. These have been used to develop masterplan proposals for restoration, retention & enhancement of heritage assets and other features, together with consideration of new interventions to enhance the identity and quality of the registered park and garden. Proposals also consider the potential for new elements to improve the quality of the gardens and increase long term sustainability, including opportunities for appropriate revenue generation.





1.1 Context Appraisal

Town Centre, Seafront, Attractions, Connections

Torquay Town Centre, comprising the primary shopping streets of Fleet Walk and Union Street and the Inner Harbour, are located north-east of the gardens, whilst Torre Abbey and Abbey Gardens are located to the west. Princess Gardens are an important public attraction on Torquay's waterfront, providing a popular promenade with views across Tor Bay towards Brixham and Berry Head. Walking and cycling routes through the gardens connect the Old Harbour, The Strand and nearby shopping areas with Abbey Park, Abbey Sands and Torquay Station in the west.

Attractions in the area include Princess Theatre, which sits within the gardens, Torre Abbey and gardens situated further west towards Torquay Station, recently built Abbey Sands mixed use development and cafes, restaurants and shops around the Old Harbour, east of the gardens. The lights along the seafront, and within Princess Gardens and Royal Terrace Gardens, are a popular attraction for visitors to Torbay.

Policy Context

The potential for enhancement of Princess Gardens is recognised within the context of local and regional planning policy. The Torbay Local Plan (2012-2030) stresses the importance of safeguarding the character and setting of Torbay's historic parks and gardens and recognises the value that the historic environment brings to the Bay acting 'as a stimulus to economic and tourist activities. It is also a source of demonstrable local pride as well as a valuable educational and aesthetic resource.'

Princess Gardens lies across two of Torbay's 24 Conservation Areas: Belgravia and Torquay Harbour. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) identifies the importance of the 'relatively formal layout of Princess Gardens' (p32) which is enclosed by the 'Avenue of Planes (*Platanus x hispanica*) along the south side of Torbay Road'. Threats which could be addressed include 'the lack of any co-ordinated interpretation of the historic built environment, such as heritage trails' and 'the Harbour Conservation Area is itself a focal point for visitors to the town but the lack of interpretation is exacerbated by the poor quality and unimaginative signage'. The CAAMP highlights the need 'to protect [the gardens] from detrimental loss all significant features'.

Torquay Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted December 2015)

The Neighbourhood Plan highlights the value of the harbour area, and its importance to Torbay's tourism industry: 'The harbour area needs to have a focus on cafes, bars and restaurants creating a safe, al fresco experience in the summer months with good quality public space all year round.'

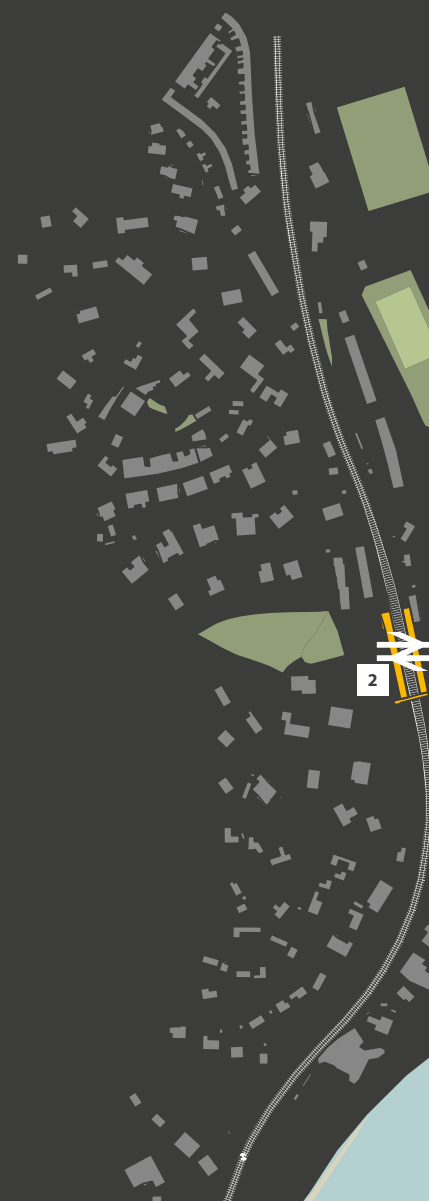
Princess Gardens have the potential to contribute to Neighbourhood Plan goals, including:

'The beach and harbourside environment will be a key investment area for refurbishment and maintenance to provide a high quality visitor experience while retaining its heritage, scale and resort ambiance.'

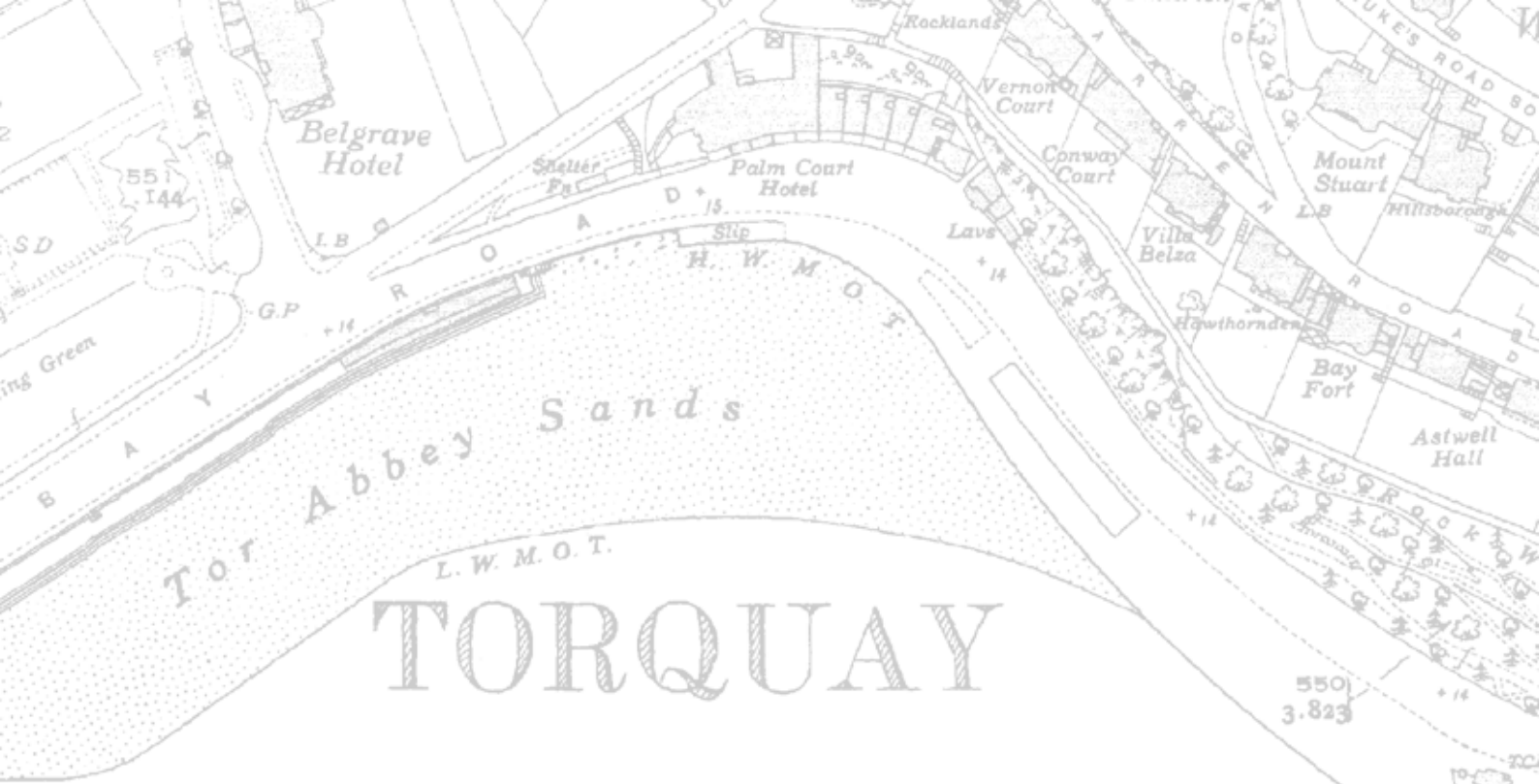
'Develop Torquay as the cultural centre of the west with a broadened range of tourism infrastructure to diversify the visitor appeal. Develop Heritage, Literary, Geology and Arts Trails.'

Torquay Town Centre Masterplan (Adopted June 2015)

The Town Centre masterplan identifies the waterfront (including Princess Gardens) as an important focus for hospitality and tourism, and recognises the potential for the Pavilions and Princess Theatre for enhancement and development to increase the attractiveness of the waterfront.



Torre



2.1 Princess Gardens Development: 1803-1892

Princess Gardens was made possible by the reclamation of land at the base of Waldon Hill. First came the construction of a road around the base of the cliffs, which is now the A379, Torbay Road. Just prior to the end of the nineteenth century, Princess Gardens were laid out on a further reclamation of land to a design by Major Garrett, borough engineer and surveyor. Changes have continued over the intervening years as described below.

Timeline

1803

Sir Lawrence Palk initiated improvements to the harbour.

1820

Development of resort tightly controlled by William Kitson, agent to the Palk estate.

1841

New road completed at foot of cliffs below Waldon Hill.

1878

Plans to build a pier as promenade and steamer landing stage were not executed.

1881

Further attempts to build a pier adjacent to Abbey Crescent (now Abbey Sands) fail.

1883

Town acquired control of the harbour, plans were laid out for garden on land reclaimed from the sea, new harbour, road below Waldon Cliff widened.

1890

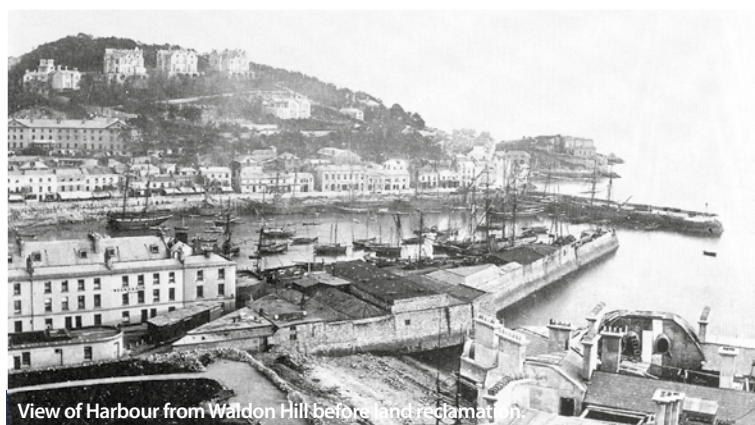
Foundation stone laid for new pier by Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria.

1892

Proposals implemented for a public garden designed by Major Garrett. New seawall and land reclamation under construction utilising dredged harbour sand.



Historic painting showing the harbour before construction of Torbay Road.



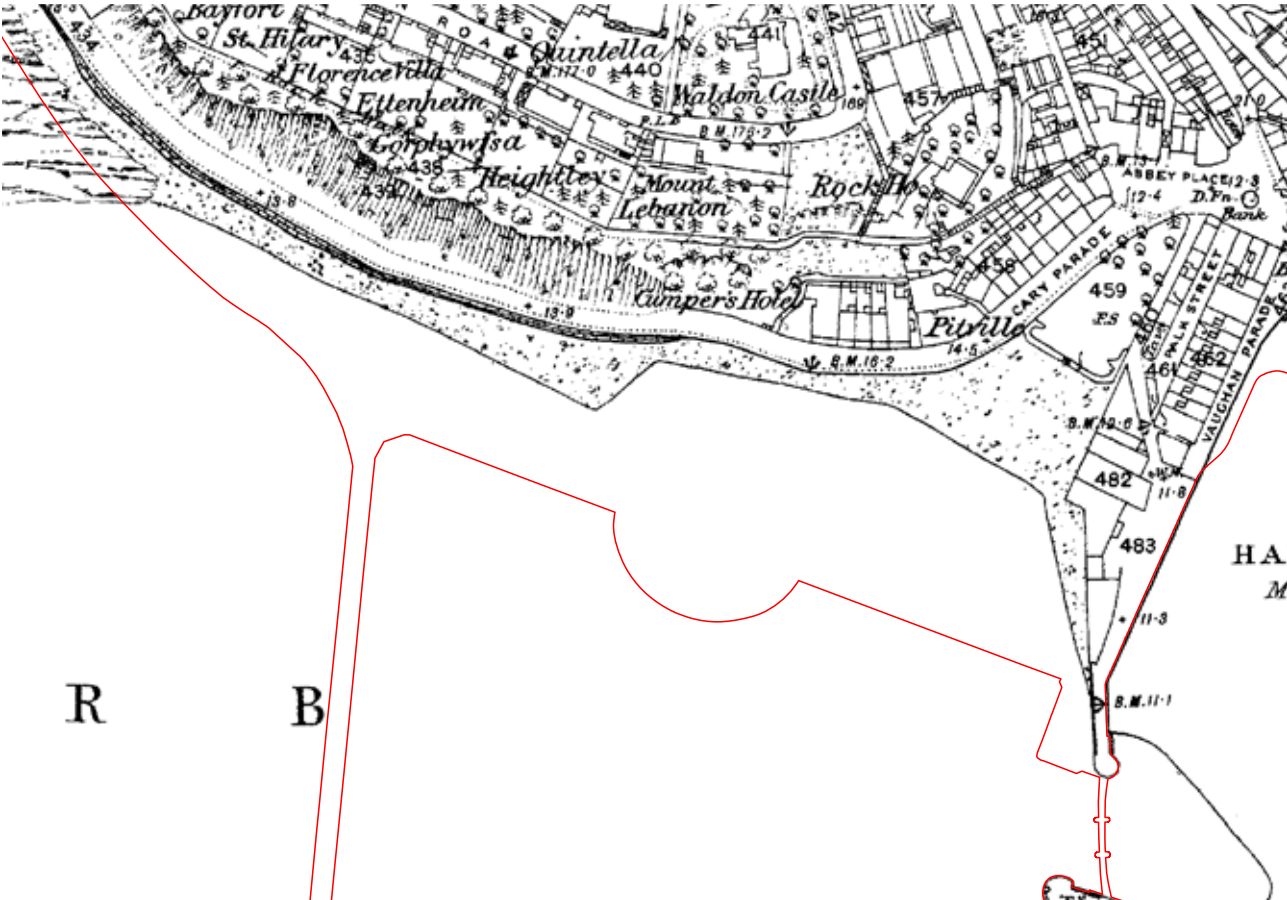
View of Harbour from Waldon Hill before land reclamation.



Land reclamation carried out in early 1870s.



View of harbour and Torbay Road from Waldon Hill in 1888.



Legend:

- 1 Torbay Road
- 2 Beach
- [Red outline] Today's Footprint



2.2 Princess Gardens Development: 1894-1909

Princess gardens and Royal terrace Gardens constructed. The main feature is a pond and fountain as a centrepiece of an oval garden planted with ornate flower beds. An ever changing of uses results in tennis courts, serpentine paths and bowling greens appearing and disappearing over the years.

Timeline

1894

Princess gardens complete and opened on 1st June. New harbour and pier constructed with included landing stage. Royal Terrace Gardens subsequently built. Entry to the gardens was via Torbay Road pay booth which proved unpopular and was later withdrawn.

Focal point of Princess Gardens is ornate fountain in the centre of sunken grassed oval with flowerbeds designed in a fleur de lis pattern surrounding.

A wide promenade runs along the new sea wall and incorporates three rectangular pedestrian shelters facing out to sea along its length.

The majority of the garden consists of paths meandering through grassed areas planted with Cordyline palms and other tree species.

Historic maps show up to 13 benches located around the oval looking towards the fountain.

Royal Terrace Gardens consists of paths winding down the steep hillside from Rock Wall and planted with a collection of exotic plants.

Hedge and metal railings separate gardens from Torbay Road and pavement.

Wellingtonia Gigantica (Sequoiadendron Gigantica or Giant Redwood) planted in the gardens by the Mayor died within weeks.

1896

Plane trees planted along Torbay Road.

1909

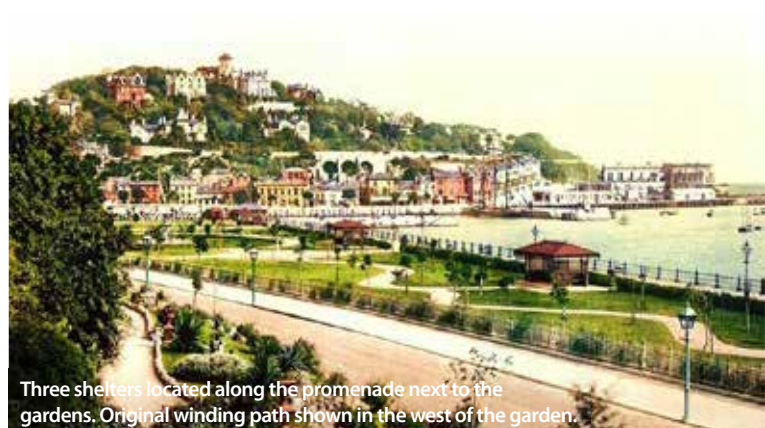
Plans approved for new pavilion.



An early image from 1895 showing the initial Princess Gardens layout.



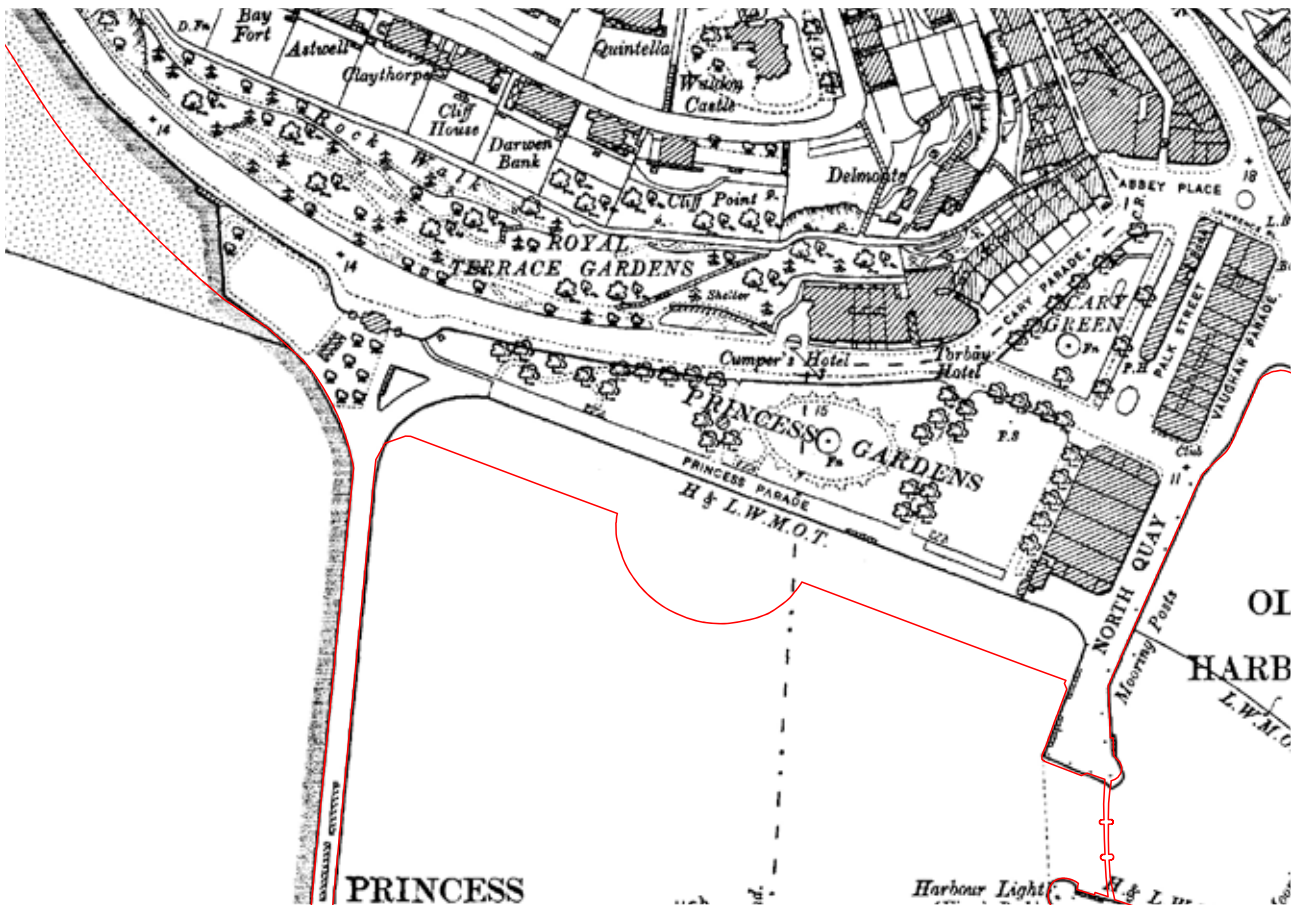
Fleur de lis planting beds feature around an ornate fountain.



Three shelters located along the promenade next to the gardens. Original winding path shown in the west of the garden.



A bowling green replaced some of the pathways to the west providing opportunities for leisure.



Legend:

- 1 Fountain
- 2 Shelter
- 3 Royal Terrace Gardens
- 4 Princess Pier
- Today's Footprint



2.3 Princess Gardens Development: 1911-1930

A big change to the gardens resulted from the construction of Torquay Pavilion as a place to provide high class attractions for residents and visitors both in summer and winter. This also resulted in an alteration to the eastern part of the gardens into an oval grassed area extensively planted with palm trees. A small pier which enabled boat trips and an outdoor cafe space was created at the sea front. The war memorial is constructed following the end of the First World War. Work on the sea front included the widening of the promenade further west incorporating sunken gardens.

Timeline

1911

Pavilion construction begun and completed in 1912.

Local postcards around this time show a wooden or metal knee height barrier to protect sunken oval garden and beds, with several ornate urns spaced around the perimeter. Light coloured rocks used for some of the path and planting bed edging. Large hedges and shrubs shown which would create shelter and separate Princess Parade from the oval garden. Victorian or Edwardian lampposts evident.

Other local photographs show tree planting on the garden between the Pavilion and the fountain oval, as well as an avenue of larger trees from Torbay road leading out to the promenade west of the oval. A circular/octagonal bandstand has been constructed beside one of the pedestrian shelters. A new short landing stage is added to the promenade.

1920

War memorial constructed

c.1928

Sunken gardens and promenade constructed to the west of Princess gardens

Mid-1930s

Local photographs show trees maturing, especially along promenade, Torbay Road and near the war memorial. Large temporary theatre tent erected to the west of the war memorial. Princess Parade promenade packed with people and deckchairs, perhaps indicates why the next phase of enlargement was needed.



Shortly after Pavilion constructed shows the garden with maturing palms, stone urns surrounding the main oval and stone edging to other planting beds.



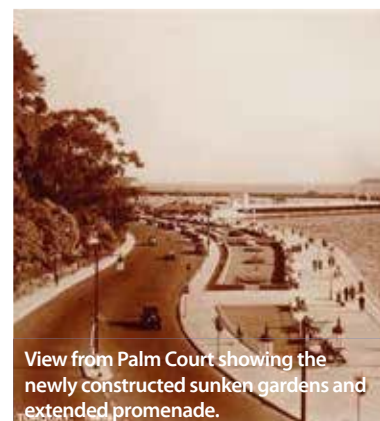
Paths and layout defined after Pavilion built largely unchanged today.



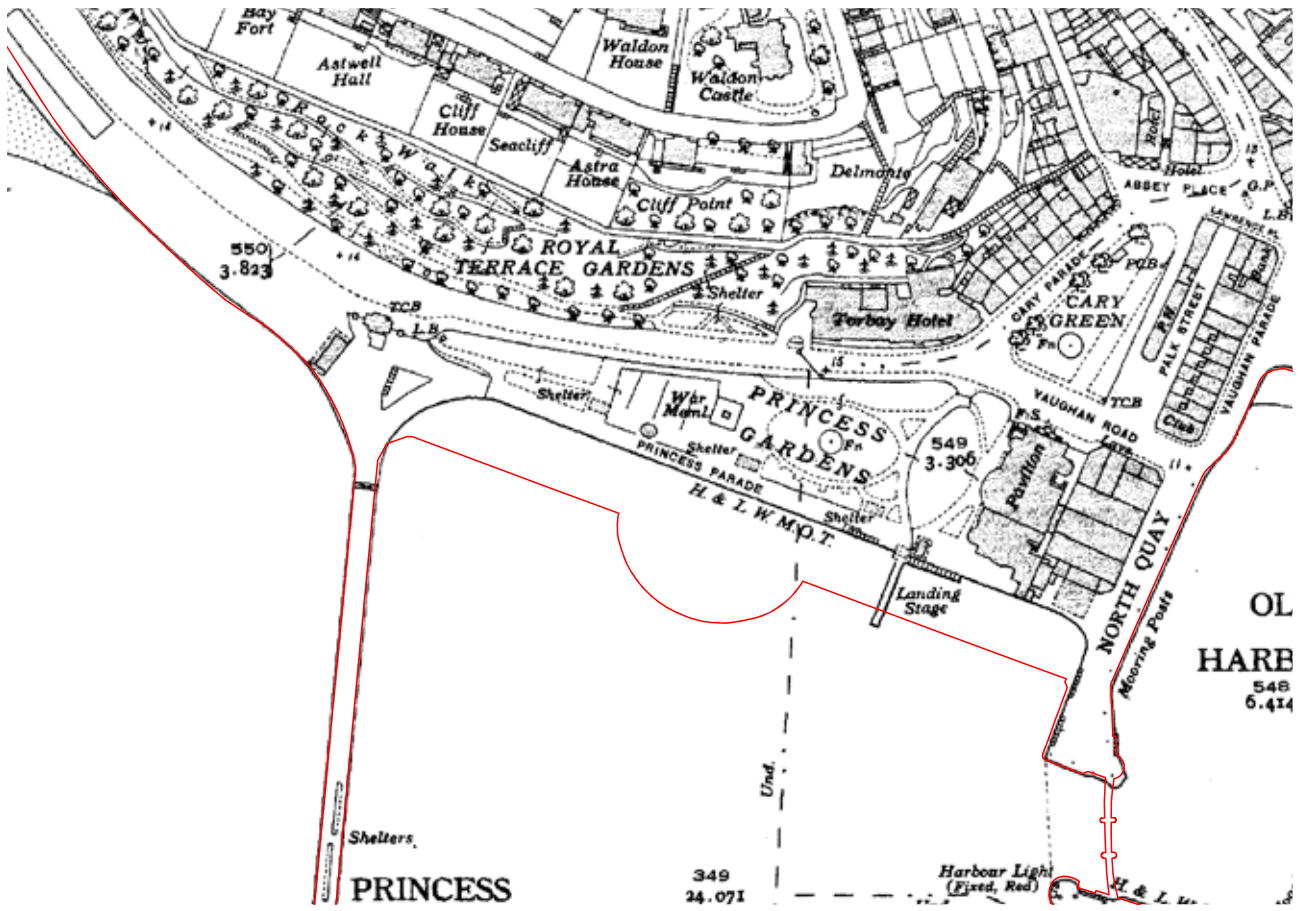
The War Memorial Remembering Torbay soldiers in the First World War



Areas provided for outdoor cafe or dining.



View from Palm Court showing the newly constructed sunken gardens and extended promenade.



Legend:

- | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|
| 1 Sunken Gardens | 2 Royal Terrace Gardens | 3 Princess Pier | 4 War Memorial | N |
| 5 Fountain | 6 Landing Stage | 7 Torquay Pavilion | Today's Footprint | ⊕ |

2.4 Princess Gardens Development: 1938-1950

During the 1930s the gardens were substantially extended through the reclamation of further land from the sea. A large arc of land extends towards the sea, with a wide grass strip running parallel to the promenade.

Timeline

1938

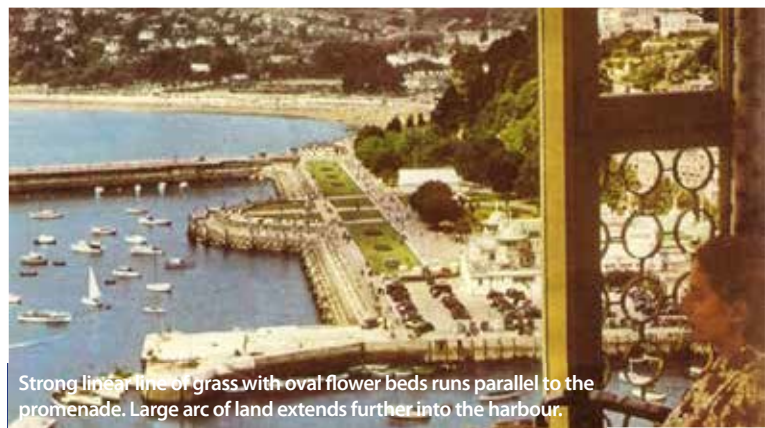
Gardens extended to the south of Princess Parade. Furthest point now adds an extra 38m to the garden.

Mid-1950s

Aerial photographs show the gardens with the large ovoid extension, largely paved and at the same level as the promenade. Many of the original garden trees removed and some replaced. Fleur de lis planting design had been lost to larger and simpler blocks of flower beds.



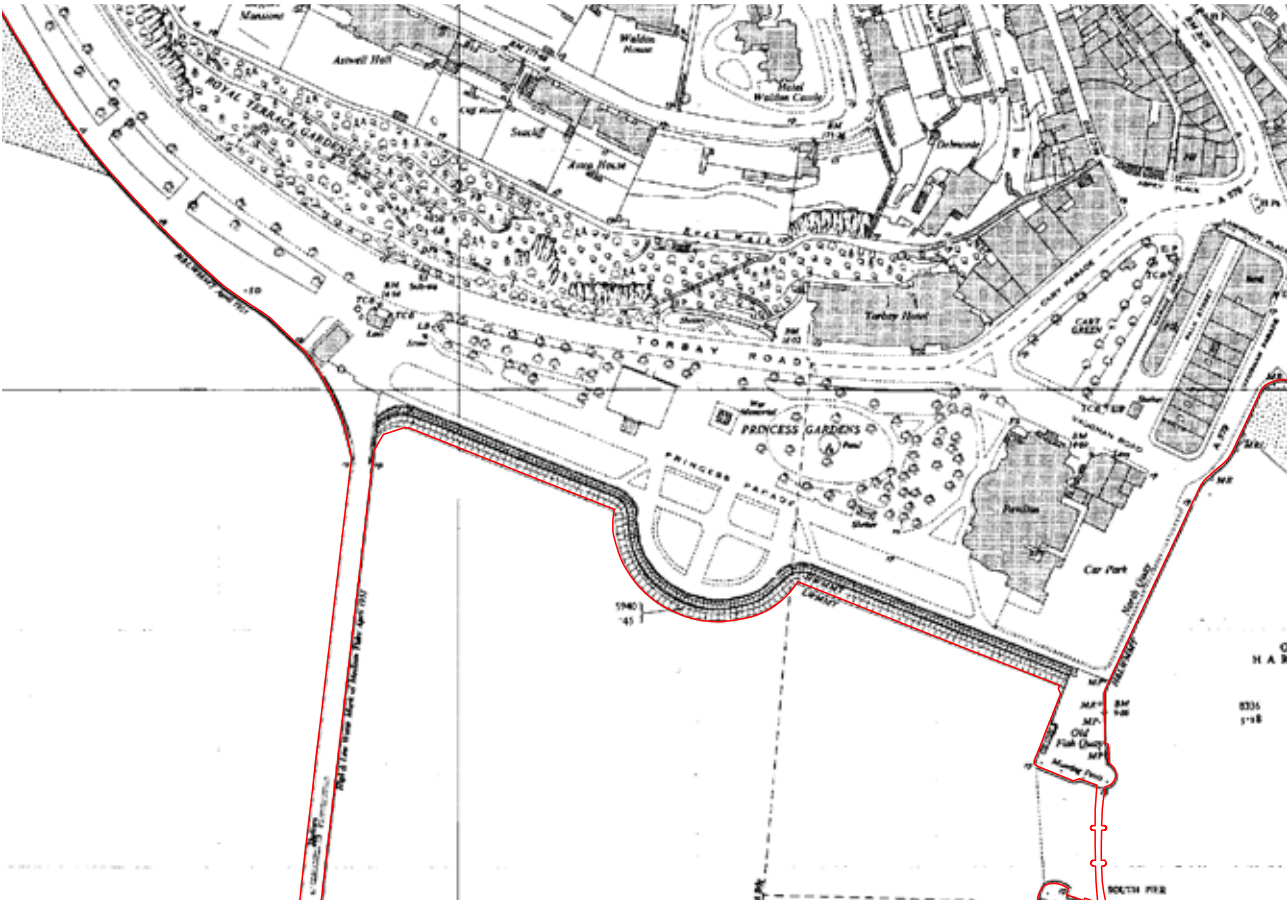
Fleur de lis flower beds replaced with larger more basic blocks of planting.



Strong linear line of grass with oval flower beds runs parallel to the promenade. Large arc of land extends further into the harbour.



Photograph showing theatre tent within the gardens before the Princess Theatre was constructed.



Legend:

- 1 Theatre Tent
- 2 War Memorial
- 3 Fountain
- 4 Torquay Pavilion
- 5 Ovoid Garden Extension
- Today's Footprint



2.5 Princess Gardens Development: 1961-1974

Princess Theatre constructed next to Princess Pier entrance. Major changes to the gardens included sinking the 'banjo' and the addition of a second deck on the seaward side. Multiple levels and low stone walls appear to severely restrict views across Torbay.

Timeline

1961

Princess Theatre built. At the same period current pedestrian shelters built.

1960s

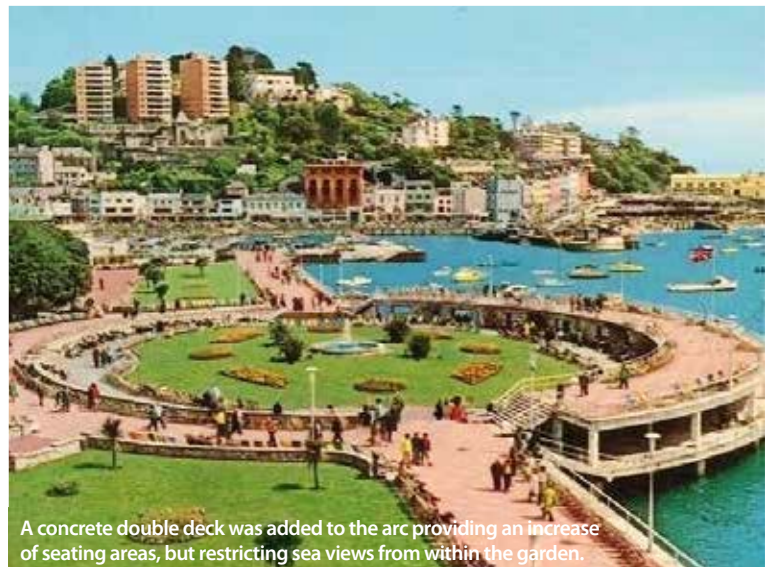
Photographs show low hedge surrounding war memorial. Seaward section of the 'banjo' altered to provide a double deck. Interior oval sunken to match height of the lower deck with staircases leading down from the promenade. Stone walls define this area. Historical design and evolution of garden disrupted by this development / historical character of gardens has begun to be lost. Fountain built in centre of sunken area surrounded by planting beds and colourfully illuminated at night.

1974

Princess Pier Concert Hall Fire 17th April



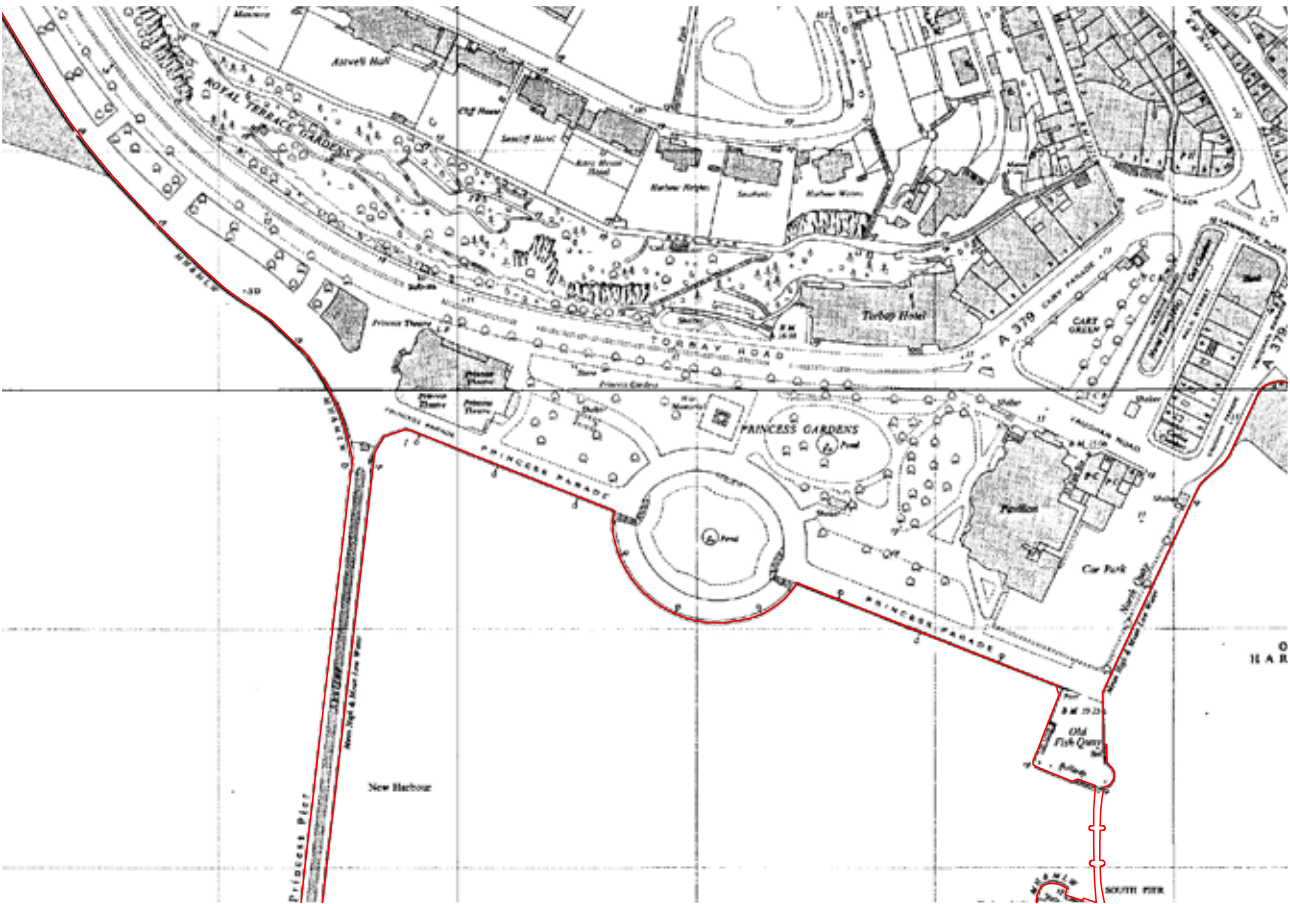
A view showing the 1960s Princess Theatre, now sunken 'banjo' area complete with flower beds and a colourfully lit fountain.



A concrete double deck was added to the arc providing an increase of seating areas, but restricting sea views from within the garden.



This 1960s photo shows a low hedge around the War Memorial and large flower beds within the garden. The oval planted area still remains fenced off with a low barrier.



Legend:

- 1 Princess Theatre
- 2 War Memorial
- 3 Fountain in Sunken Banjo Area
- 4 Fountain
- 5 Torquay Pavilion
- Today's Footprint



2.6 Princess Gardens Development: 2003 - 2017

A new pedestrian footbridge across the mouth of the Old Harbour includes a tidal barrier to improve look and usability of harbour at low tide. Major redesign of Royal Terrace Gardens see the loss of mature trees and the introduction of new paths, lighting, planting and viewing platforms. Princess Gardens is under increasing pressure from maintenance costs, tourism and incoming generating projects, Setting of Pavilions and gardens under threat from potential development.

Timeline

2003

Footbridge completes pedestrian route around Old Harbour and retains harbour water at low tide.

2010

Dense trees removed from Royal Terrace Gardens with an extensive redesign featuring new paths, planting and lighting. Gardens reopened on 30th September

Present day

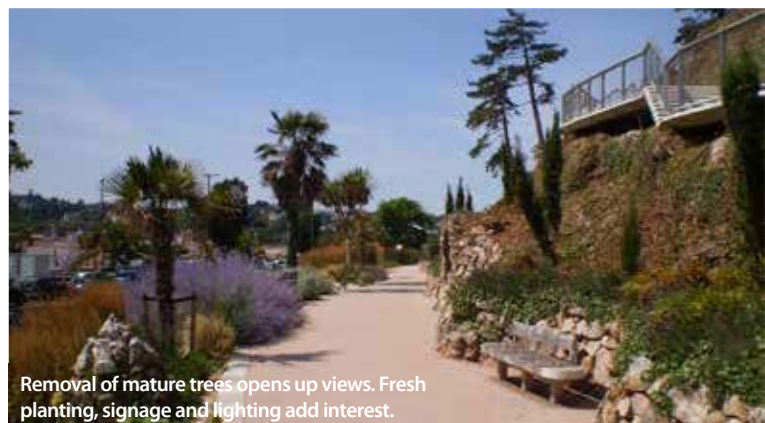
Gardens in need of some element of restoration and redesign to recover some of the lost historic features whilst providing for current recreational and income generating demands.



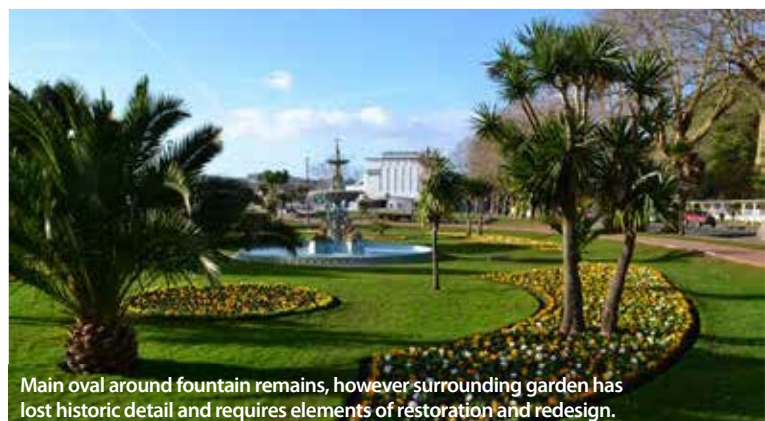
New footbridge and tidal barrier completes the pedestrian route around the Old Harbour and retains water within harbour at low tide.



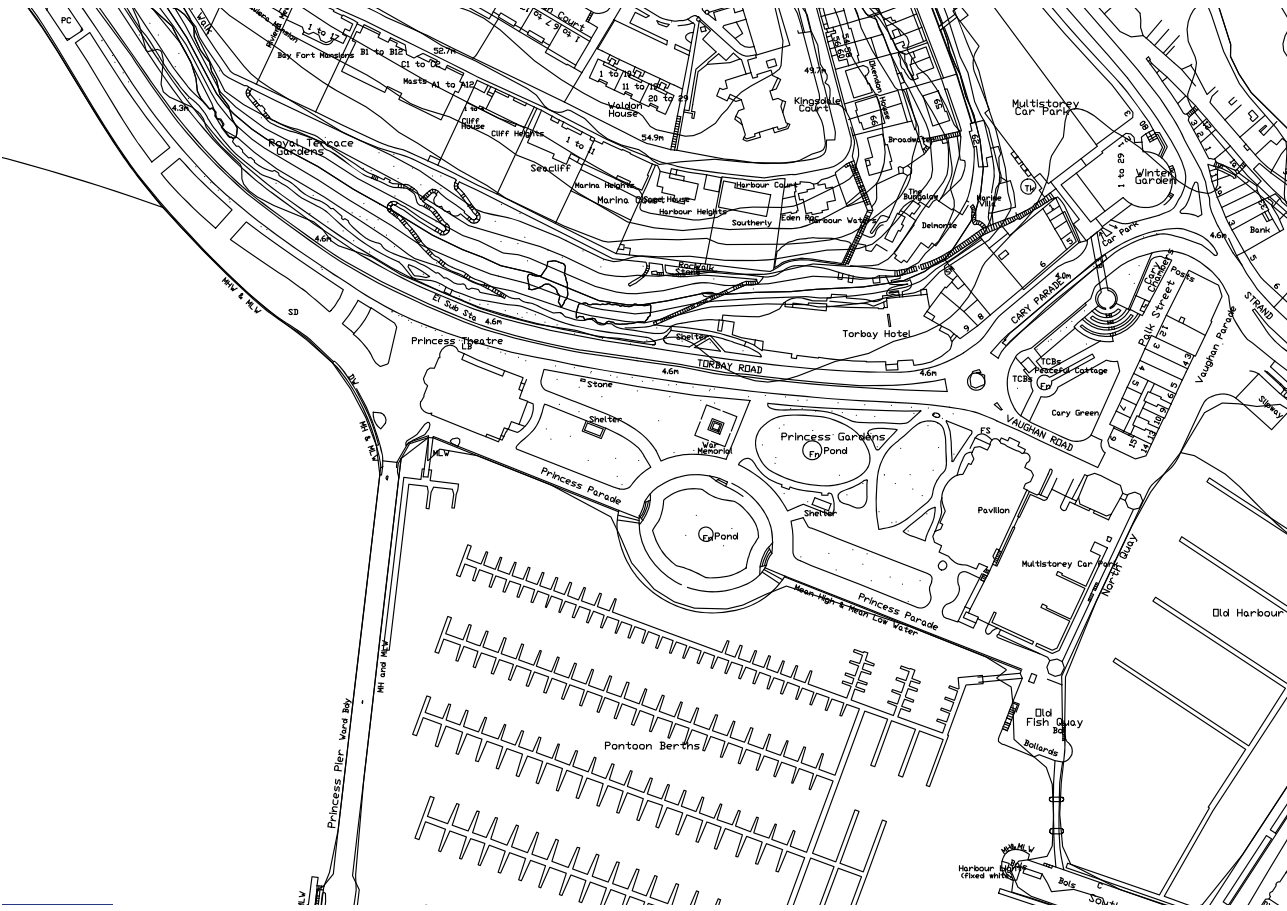
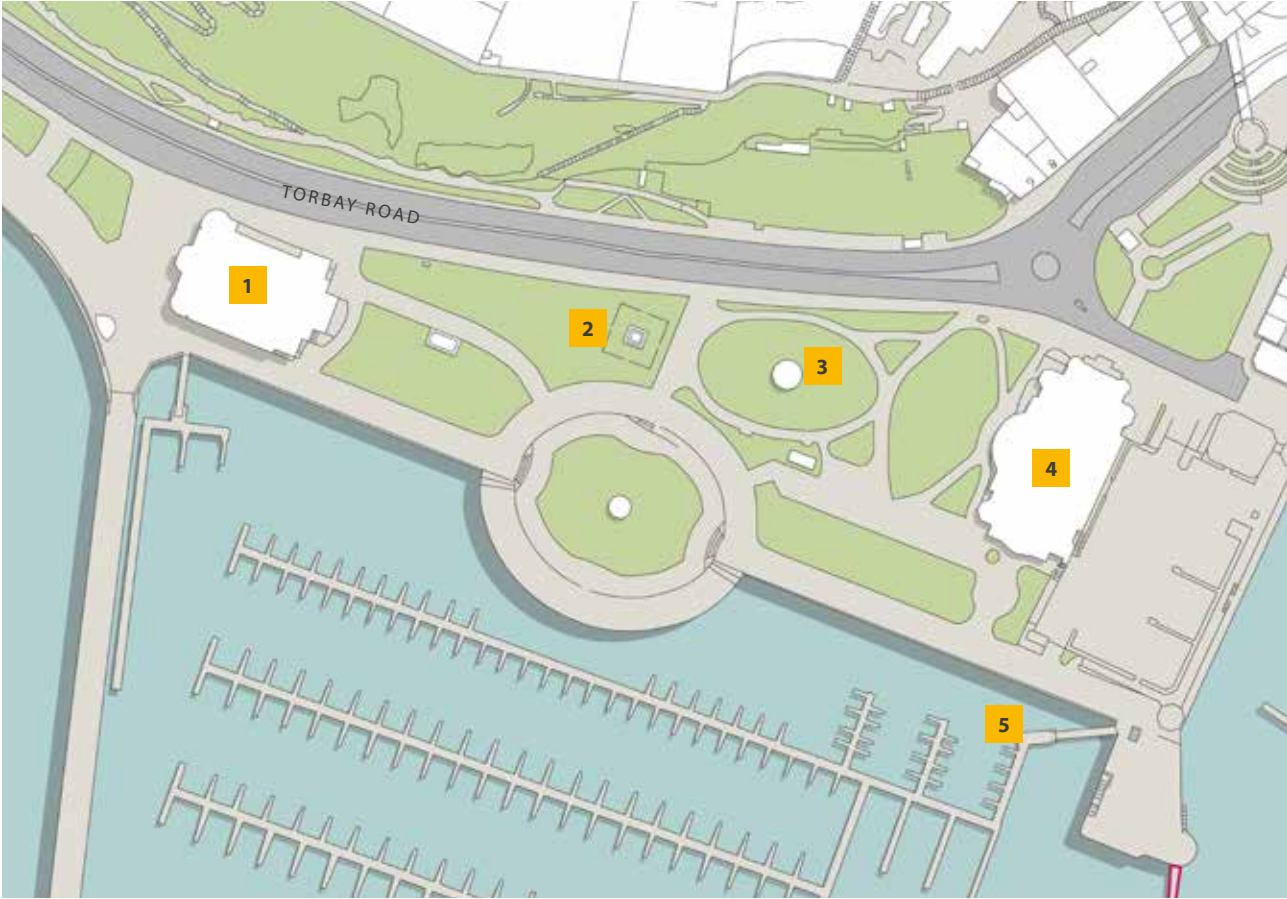
Revamped Royal Terrace Gardens features new paths and viewing platforms.



Removal of mature trees opens up views. Fresh planting, signage and lighting add interest.



Main oval around fountain remains, however surrounding garden has lost historic detail and requires elements of restoration and redesign.



Legend:

- 1 Princess Theatre
- 4 Torquay Pavilion

- 2 War Memorial
- 5 Ramp to Pontoon

3 Fountain





3.0 Site Analysis



3.1 Heritage

Torquay expanded around the harbour from the early 19th century, becoming a popular resort town. Despite many post-war redevelopments and additions to the town, there are still many historic listed buildings and structures around Princess Gardens, which retain much of their historic character. The gardens themselves have been continually shaped in the years since their original design and construction in 1894. The loss of some of the best historic features could be reinstated as part of a garden restoration.

Strengths

Despite many changes to the gardens since 1894, many historic features, including elements of the original layout and design, have been retained.

Weaknesses

Loss of historical features has adversely impacted the gardens, with poor material choices and signage. Historic design and features have been lost over the years, especially during the 1960s period of redevelopment.

Opportunities

Historic features revealed through maps and photographs could be reinstated and a plan for future maintenance put in place to ensure the most valuable assets and features are retained into the future.

Threats

Pressure from surrounding development, ongoing maintenance costs and pressure for leisure activities within gardens which may be inappropriate.



Grade II listed war memorial forms a prominent and sacred part of the historic gardens. Requires restoration.



Grade II listed fountain is the key element and focal point of the historic garden. In need of restoration.



Princess Gardens are the setting for Grade II listed Pavilion which is proposed for redevelopment in current planning application.



Legend:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Grade I Listed Building | Grade II Listed Buildings | Grade II Registered Garden |
|--|---|--|
-
- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1. Torquay Pavilion (Grade II) | 2. Fountain in Princess Gardens (Grade II) | 3. War Memorial in Princess Gardens (Grade II) | 4. The Old Toll House (Grade II) |
| 5. The Fish Quay, Torquay Harbour (Grade II) | 6. South Pier Including Former Barking Oven, Torquay Harbour (Grade II) | 7. D-Day Embarkation Slipways and Adjoining Section of Quay Wall (Grade II) | 8. 3-9 Palk Street, 3-15 Vaughan Parade (Grade II) |
| 9. 1 Palk Street (Grade II) | 10. Lloyds Bank (Grade II) | 11. Cary Estate Office (Grade II) | 12. Delmonte (Grade II) |
| 13. 28, 30, 32, 34, 38 The Terrace and The Clarence Hotel(Grade II) | 14. Parish Church of St John The Evangelist (Grade I) | 15. Higher Terrace and Attached Front Railings (Grade II) | 17. Royal Bank of Scotland (Grade II) |
| 18. Maples (Grade II) | 19. 55, 57 and 57A Rock Road (Grade II) | | |



3.2 Access / Movement / Connections

Due to the rising hills and cliffs around Torquay harbour, key movement routes are constrained to lower lying land and valleys and the seafront, which has resulted in Torbay Road and the Princess Gardens becoming a key route within the town.

The route connects the main shopping areas and tourism offerings with the station and Torre Abbey. This route is also the primary connection between Torquay and Paignton.

Strengths

There are multiple paths through the gardens resulting in a permeable layout which offers users the chance to explore and enjoy different areas of the garden. There is a strong waterfront promenade, with some of the best local views across Tor Bay.

Weaknesses

The hierarchy of routes through the garden is unclear and confusing, especially for cyclists.

Opportunities

Potential to improve foot and cycle connections, generating increased footfall through gardens and along the promenade and potential for increased trade for local businesses.

Threats

Ongoing maintenance issues. Potential conflicts between pedestrians and users on bikes.



Main Route through Princess Gardens








Royal Terrace Gardens



Main Promenade



Legend:

-  Bus Stop
-  Main Vehicular Movement
-  Pedestrian Circulation
-  Pedestrian Access to Pier
-  Potential to Restore Footpath Link



3.3 Key Views

The gardens sit in a position which offers magnificent views across Tor Bay towards Brixham and out to sea. There are elevated views from platforms within Royal Terrace Gardens which also offer a bird's eye view of the gardens. The Pavilion, War Memorial and Fountain within the garden, plus nearby listed buildings, including the Grade I St John's Church, are key visual landmarks. The Banjo (developed in the 1960s) is a barrier to some views and pedestrian movements.

Strengths

Dramatic views across the outer harbour, out to sea and across Abbey Sands to Corbyn Head, and attractive views back to Royal Terrace Gardens. The gardens also form the setting for the listed Pavilion. Royal Terrace Gardens offers elevated views of the gardens and coastline.

Weaknesses

Low stone walls and level changes around the banjo restrict views across the gardens and out to sea.

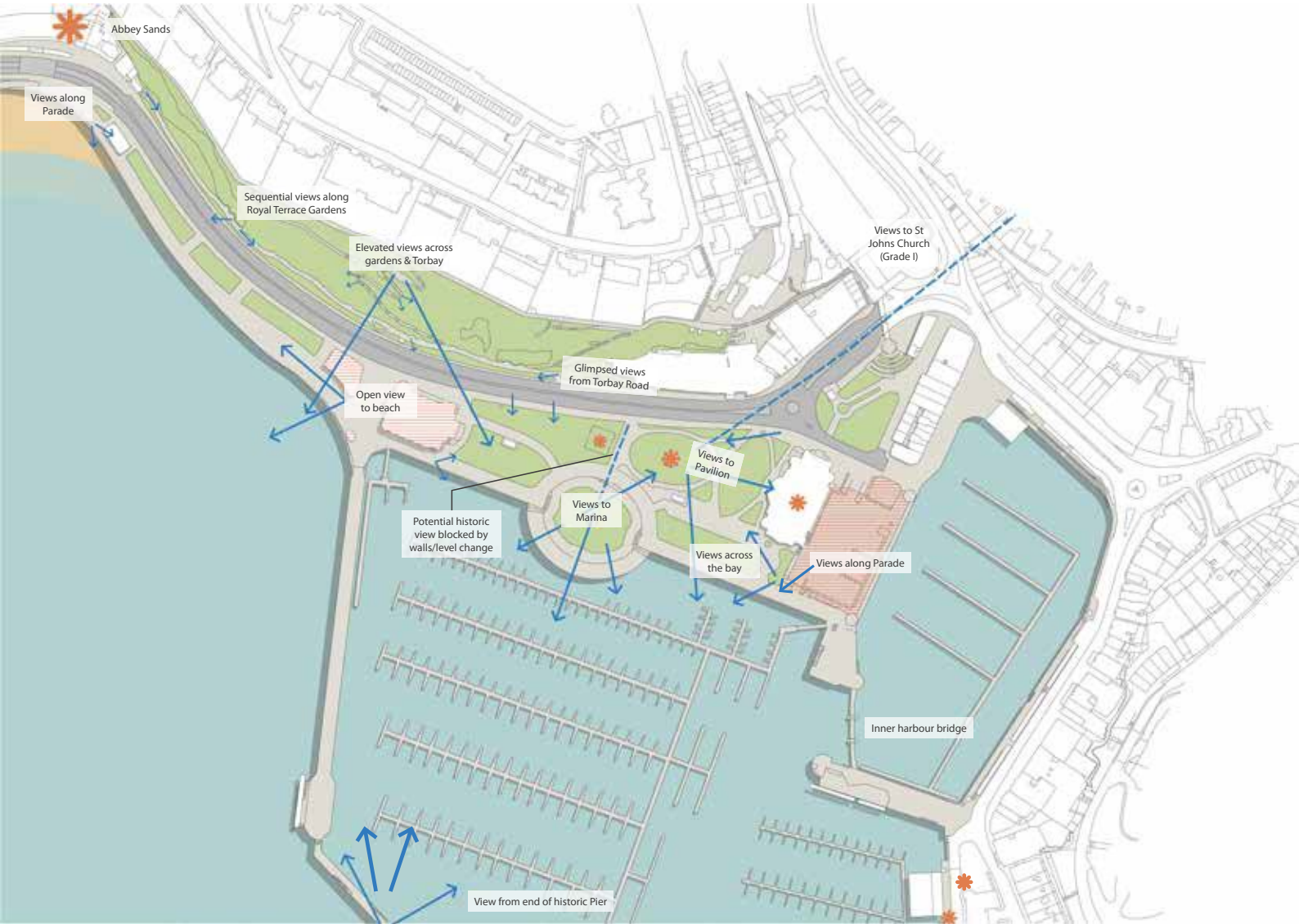
Opportunities

Removal of walls and reinstatement of the banjo to the original ground level and layout would improve views across the gardens and out into the bay.




Threats

Potential high cost for major works in this waterside location. Poor consideration of the location of structures and buildings may impact upon key views.





Legend:

-  Key Views
-  Focal Points
-  Negative Visual Feature



3.4 Trees & Planting

Torbay's mild micro-climate allows exotic plants to thrive, which makes them a key feature of this area. Torbay Palms (*Cordyline australis*) are a key plant which represents Torbay's temperate climate and tourism industry. Palms have featured within the gardens through the years, and should be the main featured tree in any restoration of the garden in order to build on this historic local feature.

Strengths

Distinctive palms give a local sense of place. Large street trees enclose the gardens from traffic on Torbay Road and help create a pleasant environment.

Weaknesses

Hornbeam trees to west of Torbay road are less suitable as a street tree. Some areas messy or haphazard in tree species or location. Could be simplified in terms of species and design. Historic shelter planting in the southern part of the gardens has been lost.

Opportunities

Replant palms to restore some elements of the original design, which featured dramatic and dense planting in some areas. Potential to relocate palms currently from Cary Green (which are due to be removed as part of hotel scheme) to achieve instant effect. Restoration of historic flower bed planting design around the fountain would reinstate the historic layout and reduce ongoing maintenance costs.

Threats

Cost, ongoing maintenance, conflict with vehicles and trees along Torbay Road. Potential pests and diseases. Use of palm species other than Cordylines (such as Phoenix, Washingtonia) should be carefully considered.

Local Species



Chusan Palm
(*Trachycarpus fortunei*)



London Plane
(*Platanus x hispanica*)



Willow Oak (*Quercus Phellos*)



Pineapple Palm
(*Canary Island Date Palm*)



Cabbage Palm
(*Cordyline australis*)



Hornbeam
(*Carpinus betulus*)



Whitebeam (*Sorbus 'Lutescens'*)



Tree of Heaven
(*Ailanthus altissima*)

Character of Planting



Sunken Gardens



Royal Terrace Walk



Princess Gardens



Princess Gardens



Legend:

- * Palm Trees
- Other Trees mostly deciduous



3.5 Materials and Street Furniture

Large areas of red tarmac paving have been used throughout the gardens, damaging their character. There is potential for more appropriate paving and edging to be used in the future, reinstating the historic character going forward. Piecemeal repair and development have reduced the gardens original unified character, and caused a deterioration in their visual appeal.

Strengths

Large number of benches, some historic, could be relocated to improved positions throughout the gardens.

Weaknesses

Lots of paving types and differing styles of street furniture present a muddled composition. Listed fountain requires repair for subsidence.

Opportunities

Renew paving materials and street furniture with a simplified palette to present a unified, high quality design. There is potential to reduce paving in some areas and replace with soft landscape to reduce the dominance of the hard surfaces.

Threats

Subsidence issues affect some paving areas. Poor choice of repair materials by contractors threatens continuing coherent design intent.

Adjacent Developments

Pavilions

The recent approval for a hotel development on the car park adjacent to the Pavilion will result in redevelopment and refurbishment of the Listed Pavilion building. It is likely that the scheme will increase footfall and activity in the gardens, and as part of the approval a s106 agreement has secured £20,000 funding to improve the gardens.

Torbay Wheel & Carousel

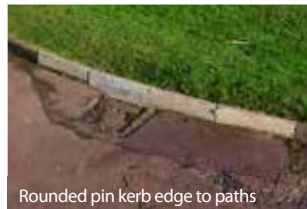
Approval has recently been granted for the Torbay Wheel to be located in the western part of the gardens, adjacent to Princess Theatre and for a Carousel to be located on the raised area in the centre of the banjo. Both the Wheel and the Carousel will generate revenue streams towards the maintenance and improvements in the gardens; secured through a legal agreement.



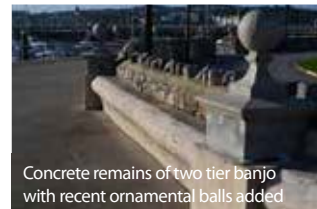
Hexagonal paving slabs



Crazy paving, granite and red tarmac paving



Rounded pin kerb edge to paths



Concrete remains of two tier banjo with recent ornamental balls added



Ornate black post & rail barrier to edge of promenade



Concrete post and chain barrier around war memorial



Green plastic bins along promenade



1960s pedestrian shelter with integrated seating



Stone memorial fenced with black metal posts & chain. Metal picket fence



Polished pebble seating opposite Palm Court



Victorian-esque seating



Solid wood benches



Victorian cast iron and wood benches



Cluttered signage and bollards of various designs



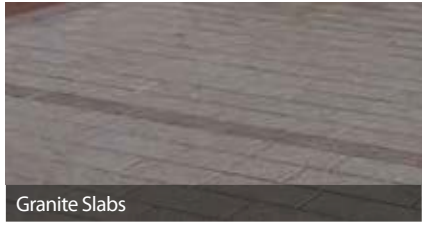
Blue metal seats with integrated theatre signs. Black metal bollards

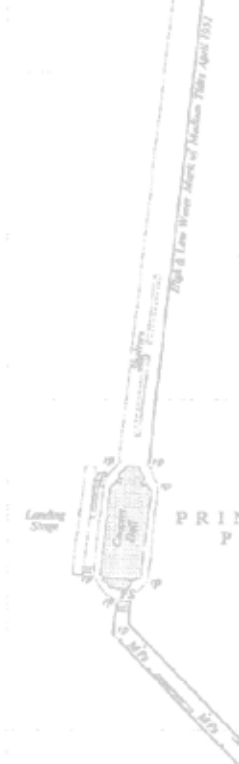
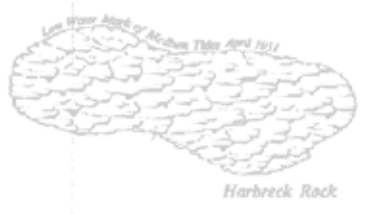


Two tier metal barrier. Low quality signage

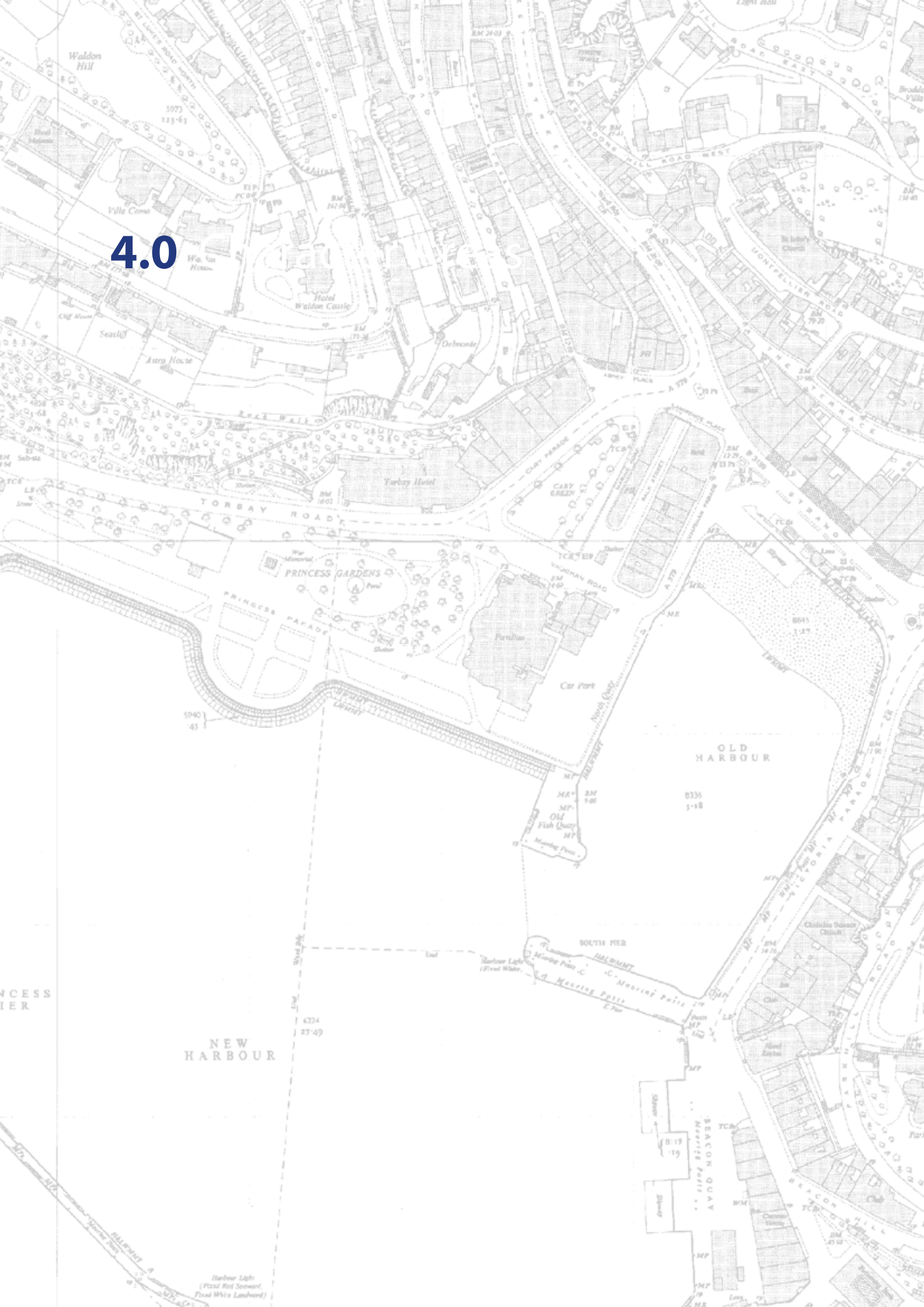


Legend:





4.0



4.1 Character Areas

From the site appraisal eight character areas have been identified which will form the basis for the garden masterplan



1. Princess Gardens

Retains the clearest elements of the original garden layout and includes important listed War Memorial and Fountain. This areas of the gardens also forms the setting to the Grade II listed Pavilion.



2. Princess Parade

The waterfront promenade from the Old Harbour to Princess Theatre was an important feature of the earlier garden layout. The level changes created when the banjo which was built in the 1960s have impacted on the integrity of this route.



3. Banjo / Circular Promenade

A large circular extension to the gardens completed in the 1930s and modified in the 1960s to provide a double deck area which fronted the harbour. The decked areas was subsequently removed during repairs to the seawall. The paving and character here is of lower quality than other areas of the garden, and there is a lack of defined use for this space.



4. Eastern Gardens

Parts of this area are suffering from localised subsidence, and it is currently dominated by large areas of red tarmac which have no defined use. The area connects the Princess Parade promenade and the historic core of the gardens, and has potential to accommodate new uses.



5. West Princess Gardens

This area has been subject to significant change through the years. Originally a meandering path connected the western promenade to the core of the gardens. Subsequently the area was developed as a bowling green, temporary theatre and is now largely grass. Car parking and overspill space from the theatre impacts upon the space, and it now contains the Torbay Wheel. Although the existing character is weak, this area has significant potential to accommodate change.



6. Sunken Gardens

This area of the gardens has retained much of its original form and character. The wide promenade retains original cast iron balustrade, paving is 1960s hexagonal concrete flags and there are multiple bench styles. The area at the northern end of the pier suffers from the poor quality pavilion buildings in this location.



7. Torbay Road

Torbay Road is the primary route linking Torquay to the southern parts of Torbay. The road forms a barrier to pedestrian movement, but large mature London Plane trees outside the Torbay Hotel provide character to the single lane dual carriageway street. Less appropriate upright Hornbeam trees near Sunken Gardens could be replaced to enhance the character of this area.



8. Royal Terrace Gardens

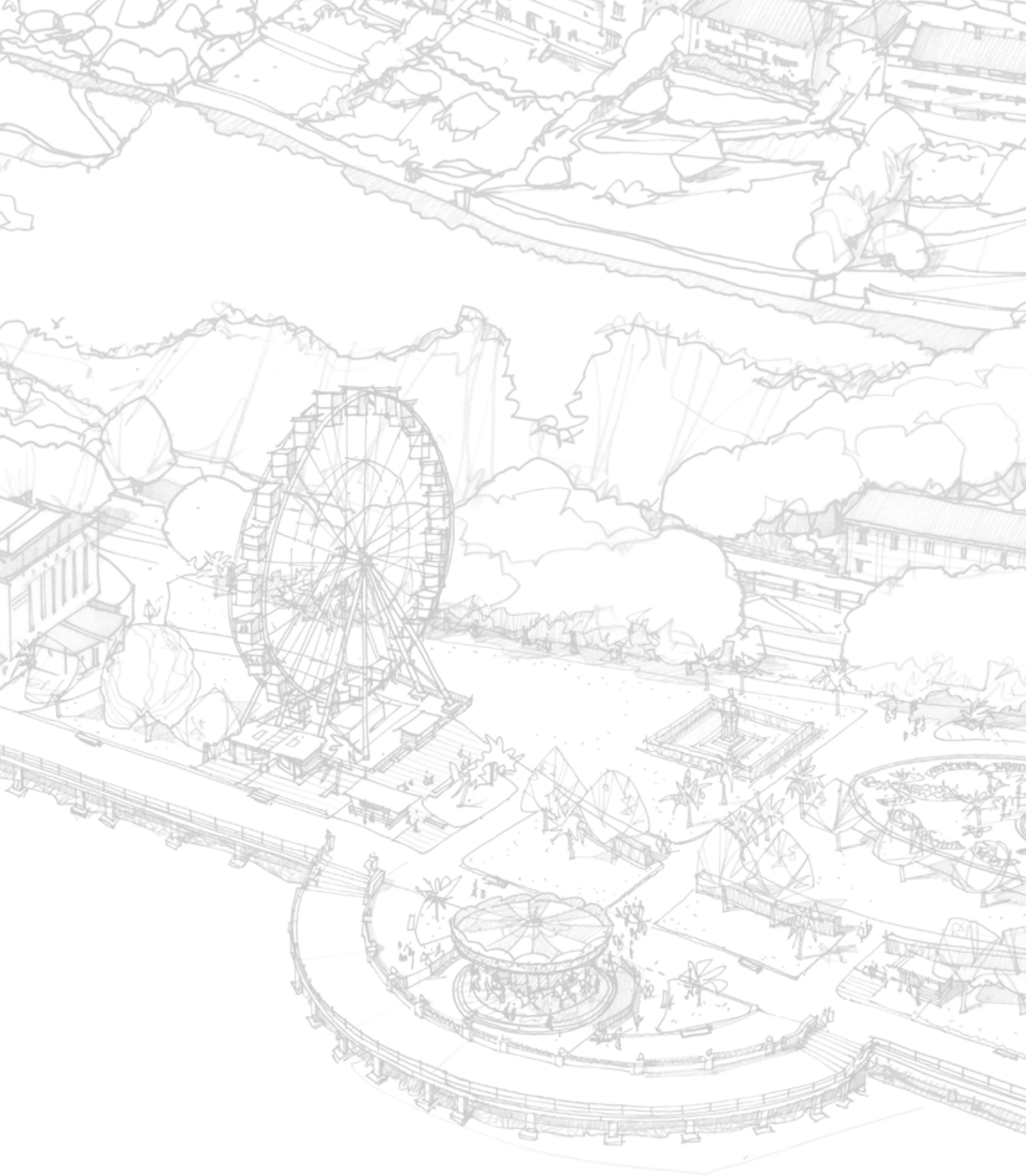
A recent comprehensive redesign and renovation has improved the accessibility and safety of the gardens. The loss of mature trees, installation of contemporary viewing platforms, lighting and paths and a new planting palette have brought a fresh character to the gardens.



Legend:

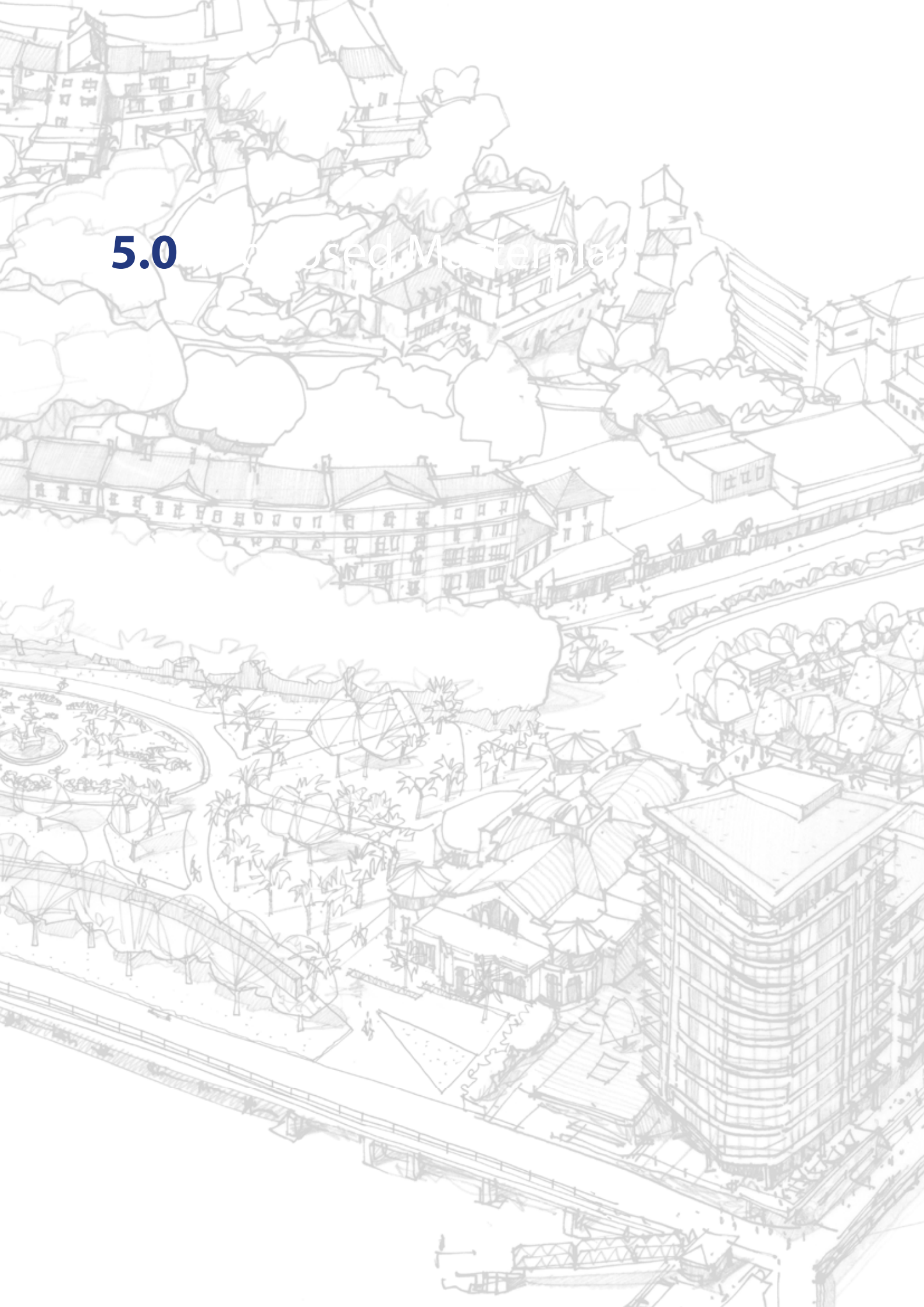
- 1. Princess Gardens
- 2. Princess Parade
- 3. Banjo
- 4. Eastern Gardens
- 5. West Princess Gardens
- 6. Sunken Gardens
- 7. Torbay Road
- 8. Royal Terrace Gardens





5.0

Sec. Masterplan



5.1 Introduction

Vision

Princess Gardens will be restored and enhanced; retaining the key features of the historic garden layout and design, whilst accommodating new uses and ensuring financial stability into the future. The reinvigoration of Princess Gardens will allow the local community and visitors to understand and enjoy the historic gardens and waterfront.

Key Objectives

Historic features

Retain and enhance the historic layout and key features of the gardens. Restore the subsiding fountain, and clean and enhance the setting of the War Memorial. Restore paths and kerbs with appropriate bound gravel paving and kerbs.

Connectivity / Legibility

The promenade and footpaths provide a hierarchy of routes which allow for leisurely enjoyment of the gardens and appreciation of the magnificent views across Tor Bay, whilst connecting Torquay Waterfront to the wider area. Improve the quality of the footpath routes and surfacing. The hierarchy of routes through the gardens will be improved, and empty areas of hard paving with no specified use minimised. When possible, reinstate original ground levels to banjo and re-establish Princess Parade promenade.

Planting

The planting design will be strengthened and enhanced through the use of appropriate species, including the refurbishment of the formal bedding design, and renewed structure and feature planting with additional trees and hedges.

Street furniture, Signage & Materials

A high quality environment will be created through the use of appropriate materials. The range of street furniture will be simplified, and historic benches reinstated around the main garden oval and planting display. A unified signage strategy which describes the rich history of the gardens will be provided, in addition to providing clear wayfinding.

Financial sustainability

Opportunities will be identified to increase use and activity within the gardens. Opportunities for appropriate income generation will be identified to allow for further investment and maintenance of the gardens into the future.

Artworks

There is potential for artworks to be incorporated within the gardens (and surrounding harbourside area as part of an art trail or similar) as part of a temporary or permanent feature. A heritage trail linking the Inner Harbour to Torre Abbey should incorporate the gardens and facilitate interpretation of their historic development.

Management plan

A management plan should be developed to clearly set out the principles and detailed guidelines for maintenance and repair work.





5.2 Proposals Described by Character Area

Princess Gardens

The Fountain, which is subsiding, is a priority for restoration. Improved lighting to the fountain should be considered. The planting bed layout should be reinstated using a design that draws upon the original Fleur de Lis design from 1894, whilst allowing easier maintenance. Bench seating will be reinstated around the main garden oval to a unified design.

The War Memorial will be cleaned and refurbished, and the recent lavender planting replaced with an evergreen formal hedge in keeping with the original design.

Paths should be resurfaced with appropriate materials which will ensure path surfacing, kerbs, street furniture and planting are part of an integrated palette of materials, sympathetic to the garden's history.

A new connection across the eastern grassed area, which will be planted with appropriate trees and palms, will strengthen the connection between the gardens and Torquay Pavilion.



Priorities

- Maintain the existing high quality paving to the promenade
- Maintain and enhance the waterfront lighting which is a key attraction for visitors
- Develop designs for contemporary shelters to incorporate pop up cafés/ facilities for visitors
- Fill the sunken banjo area and reinstate the historic promenade
- Unify Paving and Railings across the area
- Consolidate Street Furniture and Signage Design



Princess Parade & Banjo / Circular Promenade

Princess Parade has benefited from high quality granite paving during the repairs to the sea wall, improving the character of this area. However, the sunken banjo area interrupts the flow of pedestrians along the waterfront and disrupts views. Paving and character within the banjo area is of lower quality than other areas of the garden and the use of space is unclear.

There is an opportunity to raise the ground level within the banjo to the original level from the 1930s and restore the promenade, enhancing the important pedestrian and visual links. High quality natural stone paving, reinstatement of the Victorian handrail design along the promenade edge, and a unified design for street furniture would help ensure a high quality space.

There is a further opportunity to increase activity and generate income through small pop-up style cafés designed to be contemporary versions of the original 1894 garden shelters, which could incorporate the sea wall monitoring stations to either side of the banjo.

Signs and wayfinding should be carefully designed to complement the gardens, without adding clutter.



Priorities

- Maintain the existing high quality paving to the promenade
- Maintain and enhance the waterfront lighting which is a key attraction for visitors
- Develop designs for contemporary shelters to incorporate pop up cafés/ facilities for visitors
- Fill the sunken banjo area and reinstate the historic promenade
- Unify Paving and Railings across the area
- Consolidate Street Furniture and Signage Design



5.2 Proposals Described by Character Area

Eastern Gardens

There are opportunities for improvement of this area as the setting of Princess Gardens and the restored Pavilion.

The large red tarmac area will be reduced to create appropriate paths and lawn areas, redefining the character the space. A hedge alongside the sweeping path will provide shelter for the historic core of the gardens and distinguish between areas of the gardens and the promenade.

Appropriate tree planting adjacent to the promenade will reinforce the parkland setting to Princess Parade.



Priorities

- Reduce the large areas of Paving & reorganise Paths
- Reinstate grass surfaces
- Hedge and Tree Planting



West Princess Gardens

Historically this area has incorporated a range of features and temporary events, and it remains less well defined in terms of its character and use. The open nature of this area presents the primary opportunity for new activity and revenue generation through attractions.

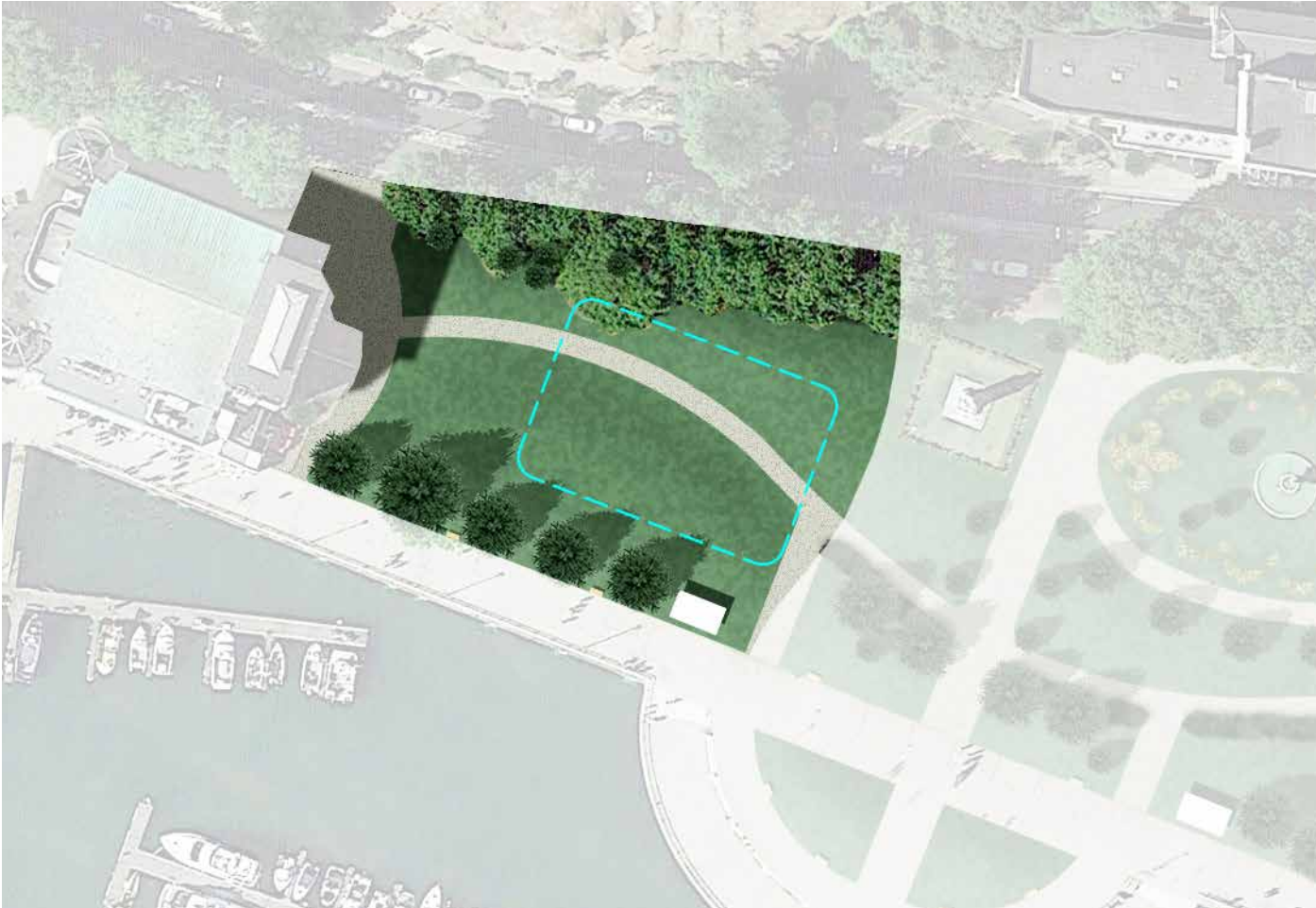
The Torbay Wheel has recently been granted consent and will provide a revenue stream for the next 5 years, as well as attracting additional visitors to the gardens. The base of the wheel should be carefully designed to integrate with and enhance the character of the gardens. Proximity to the war memorial must be considered to ensure the setting of the memorial is not undermined.

Potential for other temporary uses, such as extension to the theatre for large performances, will be considered.



Priorities

- Ensure that the Torbay Wheel, and other uses, are considered sympathetically in relation to the historic features within the gardens.
- Improve paving to match other areas of Garden
- Provide new tree planting to define the edge of this area and define the promenade



5.2 Proposals Described by Character Area

Sunken Gardens

The Sunken Gardens retain much of their original character and detail, and provide an attractive promenade with views over Abbey Sands and Tor Bay. The recent development at Abbey Sands has increased the attractiveness and use of this area.

There is potential for increasing the use and animation of this wide promenade through pop-up style cafes and renovated businesses at either end of the promenade.

The area contains lots of benches, currently a mix of styles, which could be simplified and relocated within wider gardens.

There is a longer term potential to improve paving quality from hexagonal concrete flags to granite which would match adjacent areas. Bollards and bins could be unified to comply with a garden design code.



Priorities

- Reorganise street furniture layout using a consistent style of furniture
- Generate activity and income through the use of seasonal pop-up cafés
- Retain and maintain the historic seafront railings
- Maintain and enhance the waterfront lighting which is a key attraction for visitors
- Improve the character of the existing buildings and cafes within this area, including the Princess Theatre, Pier Point Restaurant and Beach Shop
- *Longer Term – repave to match the granite paving to Princess Parade*



Torbay Road

This area is primarily defined by its curving form around the base of Royal Terrace Gardens, and the strong line of Plane Trees between Princess Theatre and the Pavilion.

Opportunities to improve the pedestrian environment, such as a shared space approach similar to that outside Abbey Sands development should be considered, which should help to slow traffic and create a higher quality environment.

The existing Plane Trees must be maintained to secure their long term future. Less appropriate upright Hornbeam trees near the Sunken Gardens could be replaced with Plane trees.



Priorities

- Retain and maintain the existing Plane trees which define and enclose Princess Gardens
- Replace less appropriate Street Trees
- *Longer Term – investigate opportunities to improve the pedestrian environment to Torbay Road*



5.2 Proposals Described by Character Area

Royal Terrace Gardens

Has had a large scale regeneration over recent years, with new planting, paths and steps, lighting, viewing platforms, benches, art and signage.

Garden art installations and signage which have faded should be replaced with longer lasting materials.

Priorities

- Continue to maintain the gardens in accordance with the Management Plan
- Maintain the lighting scheme to gardens
- Restore faded signage
- Improve interpretation and directional signage



This Design Code provides additional detail to the Princess Gardens Masterplan. It is intended to be a site specific benchmark and reference manual for a range of urban and landscape design issues that will inform future detailed design of the gardens.

Torquay Harbour Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2004) identifies that *'the main qualities that give the conservation area its special character [includes] street furniture, seats, railings etc.'* and that *'the use of suitable ground surfaces which echo the traditions and variations of the original building materials [should be used]'*

The Appraisal also identifies threats to the character and appearance of the conservation area stating that *'the harbour conservation area is itself a focal point for visitors to the town but the lack of interpretation is exacerbated by the poor quality and unimaginative signage.'*

This code sets out parameters for streetscape materials and furniture which draws precedent from the local and historic character of Princess Gardens and Torquay Harbour area.

Bollards

- Should match existing black bollards with round gold coloured ball on top.
- All bollards should match.



Paths

- Should be resin bound gravel in light buff colour with rounded 50mm pin kerbs as edge.
- Consistent colour and materials throughout garden.
- Not to be tarmac.



Promenade Railings

- To match existing black ornate bollards adjacent to Sunken Gardens.
- Square sided railings along Princess Parade should be replaced.



5.3 Design Code

Benches

- Cast iron and timber historic benches relocated around main oval garden and fountain.
- Wooden benches to be located along promenade from Abbey Sands to the Torquay Harbour.



Promenade Paving

- Granite Paving throughout promenade to match existing.
- Concrete flag to be replaced with granite.



War Memorial Boundary

- Low clipped hedge to provide boundary for War Memorial.
- Concrete bollards and railings to be removed.



Bins

- High quality black cast iron with gold detailing within historic registered garden.



Signs / Wayfinding

- High quality wayfinding signs to a consistent style and placed in well considered locations.



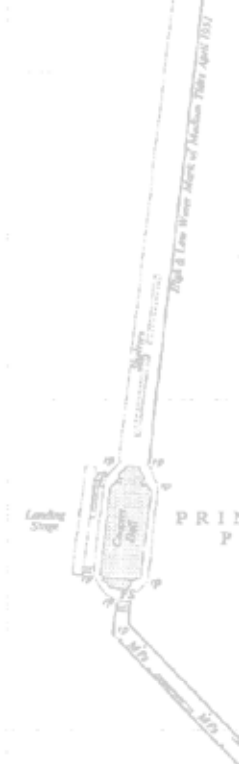
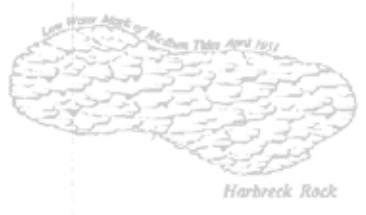
High quality wayfinding strategy

Royal Terrace Gardens Signage

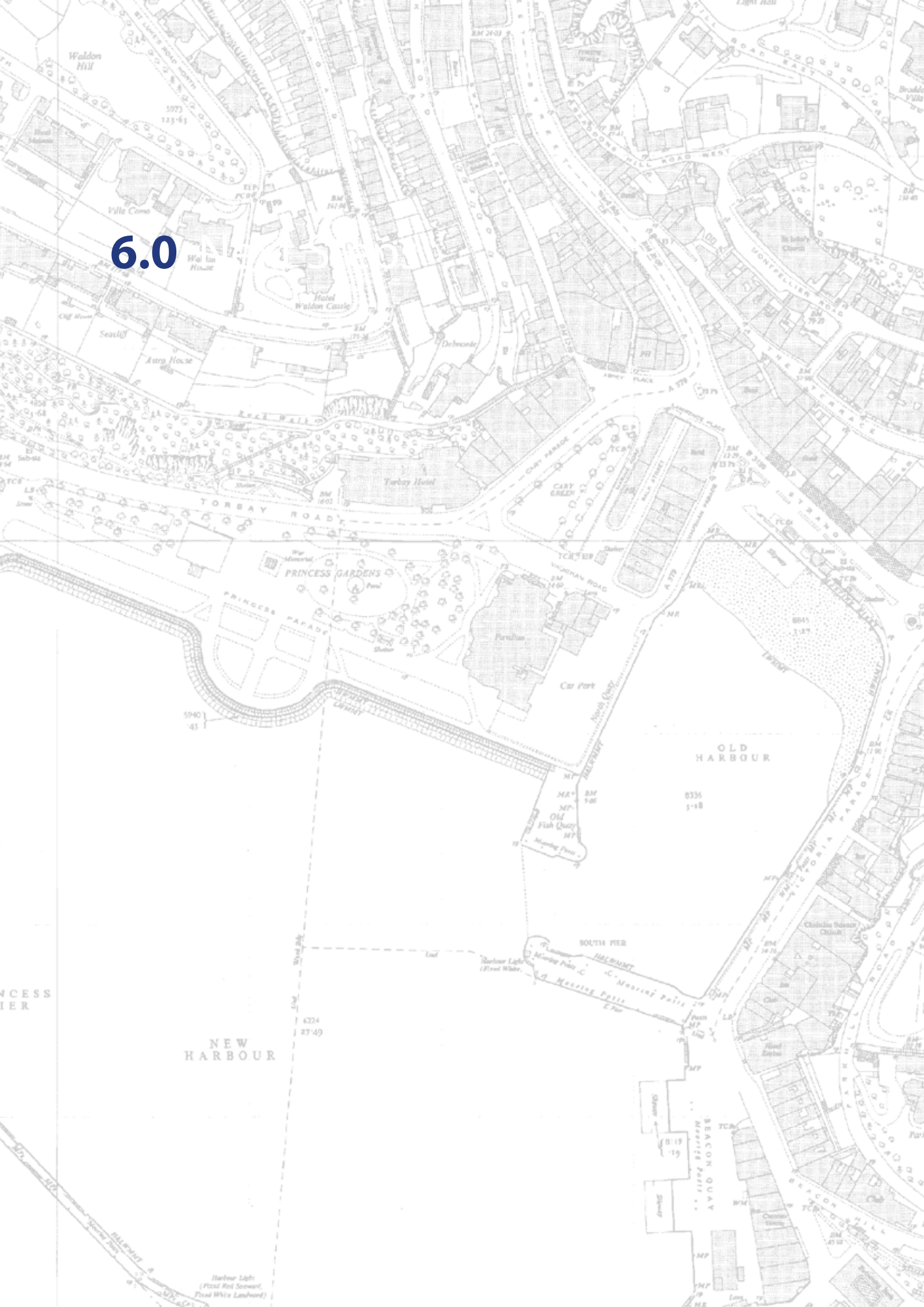
- Faded signs to be replaced with higher quality versions.



Some signs and artwork have faded



6.0



NEW HARBOUR

OLD HARBOUR

Harbour Light
(Pile Red Seaward,
Pile White Landward)

6.0 Next Steps

The next steps in the delivery of the masterplan for Princess Gardens are to secure wider support from key stakeholders and the community, and develop a costed and phased plan which secures the delivery of improvements and identifies potential funding opportunities.

Public and Stakeholder Consultation

At present consultation has been limited to key stakeholders – Historic England, Devon Gardens Trust, Princess Theatre, and Torbay Council Officers. In order to secure further support for enhancements to the gardens we would recommend wider engagement with the local community and visitors.

Princess Gardens doesn't have a friend group or easily identifiable local community. Consultation with community groups such as the Torquay Community Partnership and Torbay Green Space Partnership would raise awareness of the potential for the gardens, link to wider strategies and enable support for funding applications.

It is also important to raise awareness and consult with local businesses and visitors to Torbay. A series of panels adjacent to the Torbay Wheel could be used to raise awareness of the historic importance of the park and the proposed improvements. These could be linked to a webpage with further information and a simple survey which would allow visitors, local community members and businesses to comment on the proposals.

Priorities and Potential Phasing

We have already identified potential improvements and considered some funding opportunities, such as the Torbay Wheel and section 106 monies.

Further detailed consideration of a delivery strategy would be facilitated through the development of a detailed cost estimate for the proposals. This would enable the phasing of improvements to be considered, and facilitate potential funding applications, which may include: Arts Funding, Local Waste Funding and Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People.

To date we have identified the following actions and opportunities:

Immediate Actions

- Consult with key stakeholders, visitors and the community to agree priorities
- Identify funding opportunities and potential revenue streams
- Develop a cost plan and potential phasing/delivery strategy

Early Priorities

- Reinstate Fleur de Lis planting design to formal garden
- Restore Princess Gardens Fountain
- Enhance War Memorial, and reinstate evergreen formal hedging
- Improve the footpath network within the gardens, and reduce the paved area where possible
- Develop interpretation strategy and signage
- Develop design for Hotel and Pavilion with consideration of links with Princess Gardens

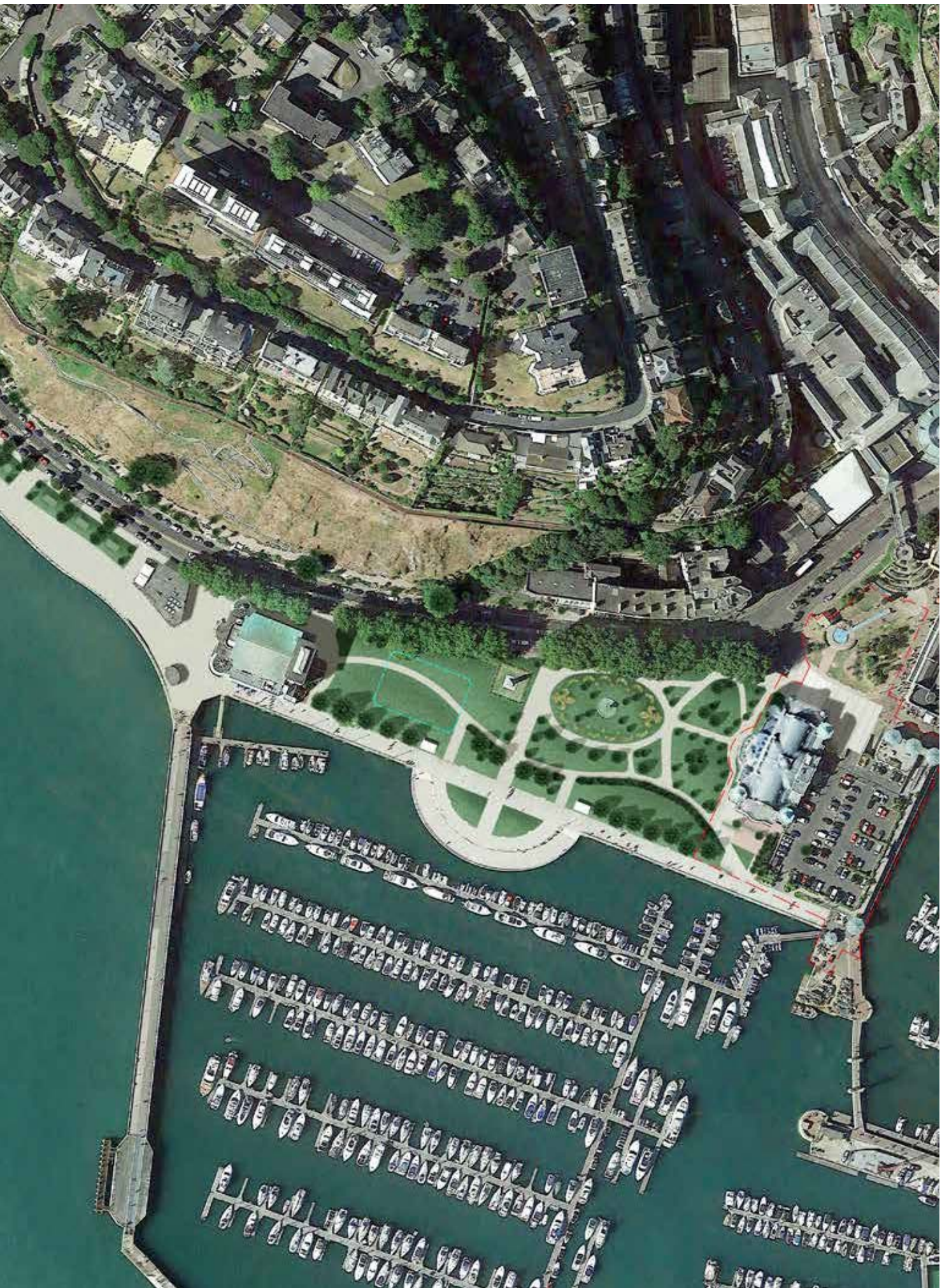
Longer Term Aspirations

- Develop designs for contemporary shelters to incorporate pop up cafés/facilities for visitors
- Enhance promenade and remove banjo – consider links to local developments which may generate fill material which could be used to raise ground levels, and consider external funding opportunities
- Replace inappropriate tree species to Torbay Road
- Develop a Heritage Trail and Arts Strategy

Management Plan

A detailed management plan should be developed, following the principles set out above, to ensure the long term sustainable of Princess Gardens and Royal Terrace Gardens.











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landscape

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