

THE WELCOMING CAMPUS: ART, PEOPLE, AND NATURE IN DIALOGUE

A Public Art Strategy for
North East Quadrant
Highfield Campus
Southampton



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Barbara Hepworth, Two Figures
Image © Thierry Bal

Foreword

The North East Quadrant (NEQ) marks an important start of the University of Southampton's Estates Masterplan. Providing our most sustainable building ever and an significant entrance to our campus. It will provide for the next generation of teaching and learning spaces on Highfield, give a new home to our award winning Primary care team and Medical School from within the Faculty of Medicine. As we look to the future, we remain rooted in a rich legacy of integrating art, nature, and architecture-principles established in Basil Spence's original vision for the Highfield Campus.

With this strategy, *The Welcoming Campus: Art, People, and Nature in Dialogue*, we reaffirm and expand that vision, ensuring the NEQ becomes not only a space for learning, but a place of connection, reflection, and belonging. At the heart of this strategy is the belief that public art has the power to welcome, to challenge, and to connect. By embedding artworks into the very fabric of the NEQ, from sculpture and play to curated collections, we are investing in a future where creativity and community go hand in hand.

This is not art for art's sake; it is art in service of people and place. It is about making visible the stories, identities, and hopes of those who live, learn, and work here. Crucially, this is a strategy shaped by dialogue. Students, staff, local communities, and artists have all played a part in shaping what this new campus will mean and how it will be experienced. The result is a deeply thoughtful framework that celebrates sustainability, inclusivity, and shared ownership, values that lie at the core of our mission. As we move toward realising this vision, I want to thank all those who have contributed their ideas, time and creativity to this strategy. I am excited to see how the NEQ will come alive with artworks that do more than decorate-they welcome, they connect, and they inspire.

Professor Deborah Gill
Vice-President Education & Student Experience

Introduction

The Welcoming Campus: Art, People, and Nature in Dialogue is a public art strategy written by leading public art organisation, UP Projects for the North East Quadrant ('NEQ'), a new addition to the existing Highfield Campus at the University of Southampton. UP Projects is a public art organisation that brings over 20 years experience of commissioning highly ambitious public art projects that foreground community engagement processes, with a commitment to reflecting diversity in the public realm and championing environmental sustainability.

Scheduled to complete in 2027, the NEQ will provide much needed new cutting-edge teaching and learning spaces as well as high quality public realm, enhancing the experience of both staff and students. Embedding art within campus life has long been a priority for the University of Southampton, first established in 1956 through Basil Spence's masterplan for Highfield that saw sculptures by Barbara Hepworth and F.E. McWilliam permeate the landscape rich masterplan. This public art strategy takes inspiration from this historic relationship, activating the new public realm at NEQ whilst supporting the University's broader ambitions to create a welcoming, inclusive and sustainable place for students, staff and neighbouring communities to enjoy.

Community engagement activities facilitated by artist, Vanessa Rolf have supported the development of this strategy with workshops being held with students from Cantell School, Basset Green Primary School, and Swaythling Primary School. Engagement activities have also taken place within community settings with local resident groups Swaythling Neighbourhood Centre and Thursdays Together at St Alban's Church, along with activities for students at SUSU (University of Southampton's Student Union) and Winchester School of Art. Please see community engagement section for more details.



Our House is Custom House by Jessie Brennan, 2019
Image courtesy Alastair Fyfe



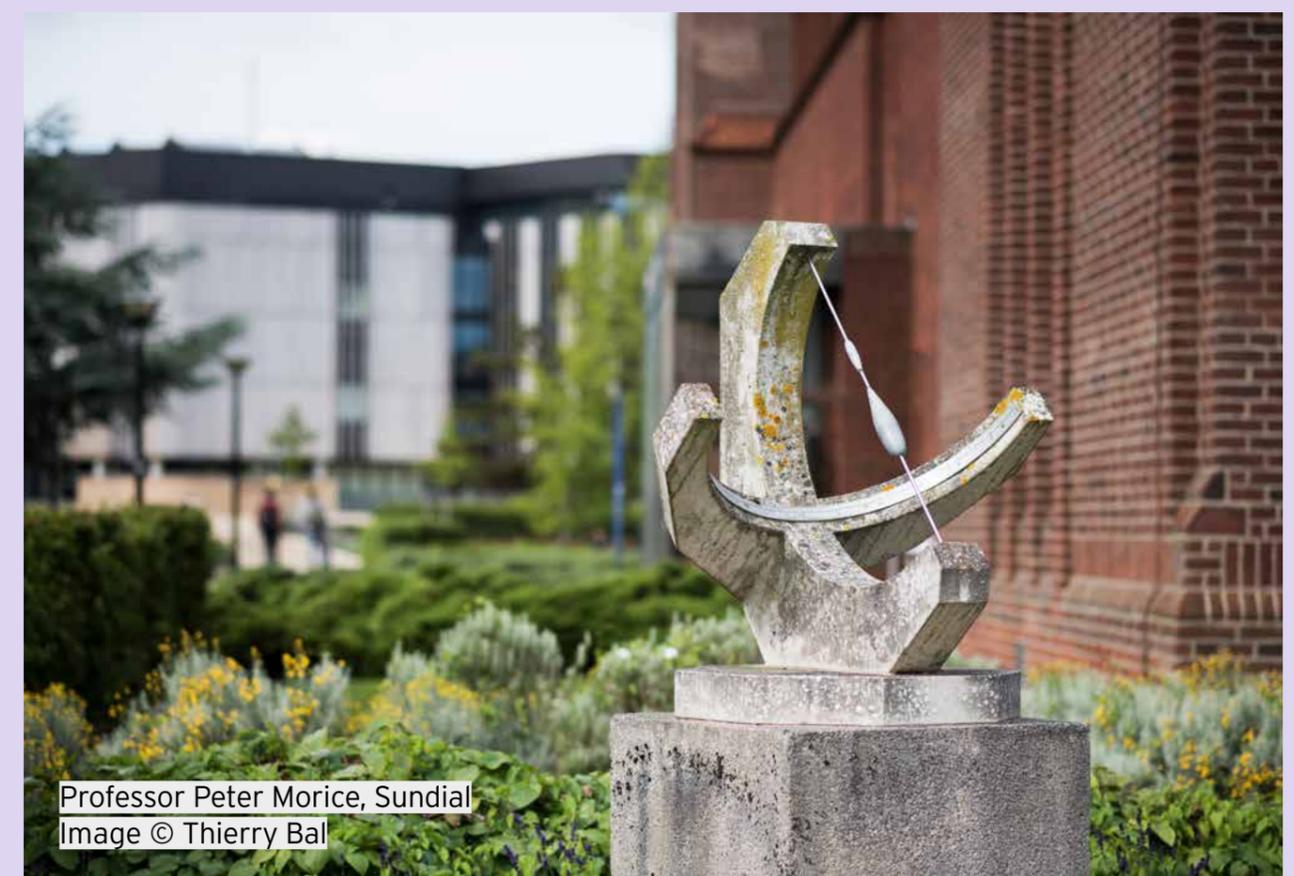
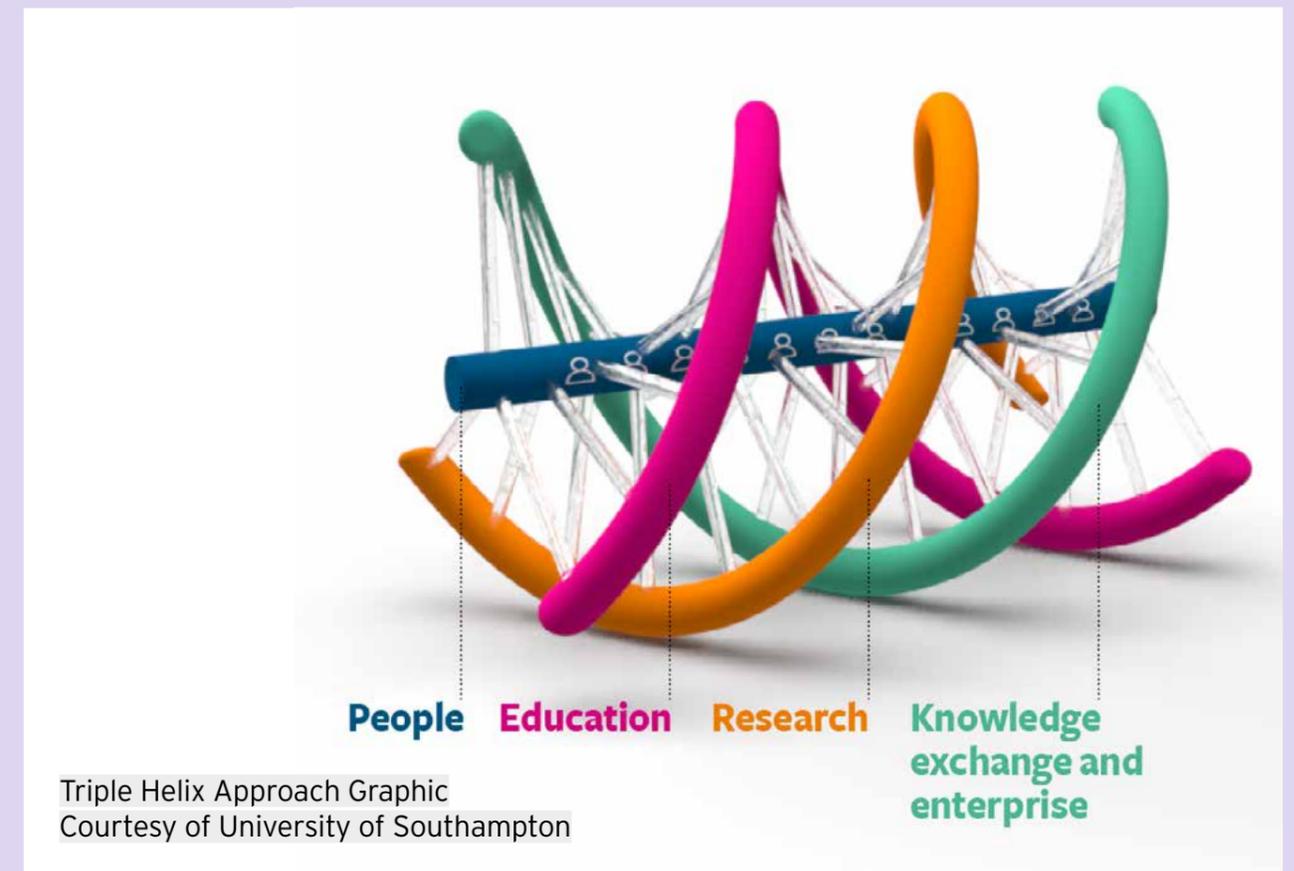
Render of North East Quadrant
Courtesy of Shepard Robson Architects

As a new part of the city of Southampton as well as Highfield Campus, this strategy has been compiled to align with key strategic aims as set out by the city in their *Southampton Together: Southampton's Culture Strategy 2021-2031* that emphasise a community centred approach to commissioning. The strategy also aligns with the vision for public art "exciting public spaces, filled with our diverse stories" as developed by the Public Art Working Group chaired by Carolyn Abel, and is formed with a wider understanding of Southampton's Renaissance Vision that is fundamental to the future transformation of the city as a whole.

This strategy is also designed to align with the University's strategic aims, including its triple helix approach that combines people, education and research with knowledge exchange and enterprise. With attention also be paid to the University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy as well as its Sustainability Policy.

This document outlines a clear vision for public art at NEQ, that takes inspiration from the University's longstanding commitment to embed art and nature into the Southampton experience, for students and local communities to enjoy. This vision is supported by a set of public art principles and themes, as well as a series of commissioning opportunities that clearly outline how artists and communities can become involved in shaping the new campus as it emerges ready to welcome people in 2027 and beyond.

Central to the vision is ensuring that the NEQ is a welcoming new addition to Highfield Campus, that responds to the needs of students, staff and surrounding communities, ensuring this new piece of the city is not only activated through public art but is an inclusive space for everyone to use and enjoy.



Context

Highfield Campus serves as the principal hub for University of Southampton, situated approximately three miles north of the city centre, near Southampton Common. The campus was officially inaugurated in 1914 but was repurposed as a military hospital during World War I. It reopened in 1919, initially comprising an arts building, shared lecture rooms, and science laboratories.

Significant expansion occurred in the 1960's under architect Sir Basil Spence, who developed a masterplan that introduced modernist architecture and landscaped social spaces. Public art has been a key feature of campus life for many years. Notable sculptures include *Puy de Dôme* by F.E. McWilliam, a reclining figure inspired by the volcanic region in France, and two standing forms by Barbara Hepworth, positioned to engage in visual dialogue across a stream.

Currently, the campus is undergoing a major transformation with the NEQ development. This £180 million project aims to enhance the student experience by integrating state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities with social spaces. Situated at the corner of Burgess Road and Broadlands Road, the NEQ will feature a five-storey, 15,000 sqm teaching and learning building designed by Sheppard Robson Architects. The facility will include large lecture theatres, flexible teaching spaces, seminar rooms, computer labs, and independent study areas. A central atrium will connect three interconnected blocks, fostering collaboration and social interaction. The building will also house a student hub offering pastoral and wellbeing support, a café, changing facilities, and a nursing room.

Designed with sustainability in mind, the NEQ aims to achieve BREEAM Excellent certification, incorporating energy-efficient materials, natural ventilation, solar panels, and wildflower roofs.



The surrounding landscape will enhance biodiversity and provide outdoor spaces for study and relaxation. Improved pedestrian and cycle routes, along with a mobility hub supporting shared transport options, will promote sustainable travel to and from the campus.

The key aims for the new NEQ are to create:

- Generous and welcoming public green spaces that increase biodiversity.
- A sense of arrival onto the Highfield Campus.
- A great place for staff, students and the public to work, meet and be.
- Well-designed spaces and places to enhance a greater sense of wellbeing.

The NEQ is of course also part of a wider neighbourhood context and finds itself at the intersection of Bassett and Swaythling which are home to a significant residential population.

North West Quadrant

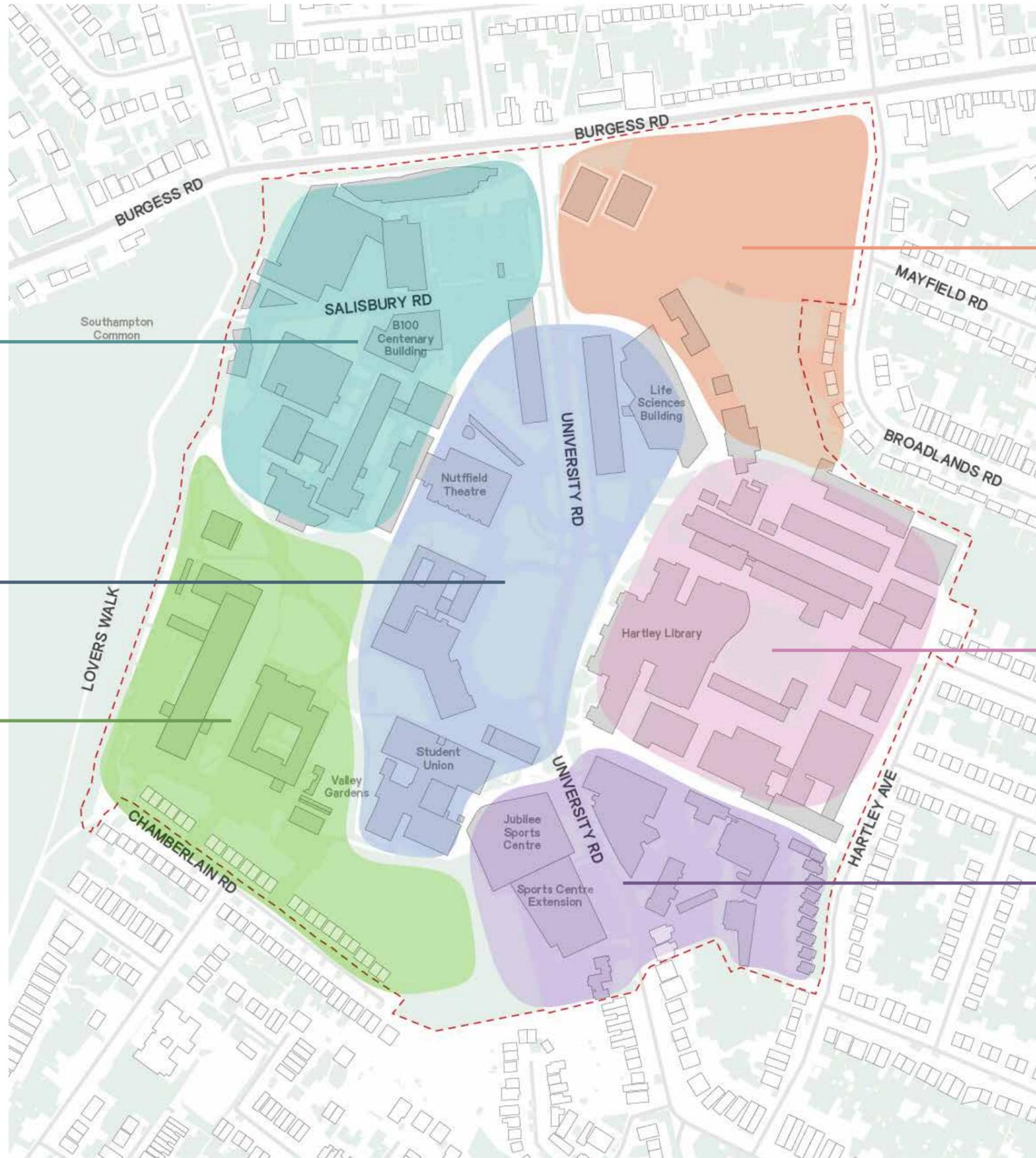
North East Quadrant

Heart of Campus

Engineering Square

South East Quadrant

South West Quadrant



Priority Communities

Three priority communities have been identified that public artworks at NEQ should engage with and speak to. These are outlined below in order of priority. It is vital that the public artworks represent and respond to the diverse identities and needs of these future user groups.

1. Students

The student body is by far the largest user group that engage with campus life. It is therefore essential that public art at NEQ engages them through the process of their creation. It is also important to acknowledge the rich diversity of the student population with students from over 120 countries including many students welcomed from China.

2. Staff

A large share of the 7,000 people that are employed by the University of Southampton are based within the Highfield Campus and will interact with the new NEQ site on a daily basis. The public art offer must not only appeal to them but, where possible, actively draw on their rich knowledge, skillsets and lived experience.

3. Surrounding Residential Communities

Though not primary users of the campus, the surrounding communities residing in the neighbouring wards, including Bassett and Swaythling, should feel welcome to use the campus as a local asset and associate the new publicly accessible spaces at NEQ as inviting, welcoming and family friendly. The demographics of these wards show that the majority ethnic group is white, with the second highest being Asian.

54%
**BLACK, ASIAN AND
MINORITY ETHNIC**

54% of University of Southampton students identify their ethnic background as either Asian, Black, Mixed ethnicity or any other ethnicity.

141 **COUNTRIES** **WITH 35%**
FROM OVERSEAS

Students at the University of Southampton represent a demographic from 141 different countries. Within this representation, the largest country of origin (outside of the UK) for students is China.

74% of residents within the Bassett Ward identify their ethnicity as White. This is followed by Asian, and with a smaller numbers of Black, Arab, Mixed, and other ethnicities.

73% of residents within the Swaythling Ward predominantly identify their ethnicity as White. This is notably followed by Asian, and smaller Black, Arab, Mixed, and other minority communities.

Community Engagement Process

Community engagement activity facilitated by artist, Vanessa Rolf has been carried out to support the development of this public art strategy with workshops being held with students from Cantell School, Basset Green Primary School, Swaythling Primary School, community settings with local residents groups Swaythling Neighbourhood Centre and Thursdays Together at St Alban's Church alongside workshops for students at SUSU (University of Southampton's Student Union) and Winchester School of Art.

Engagement activity focused on working through the medium of collage to introduce people to the idea of the new NEQ development and explored what makes us feel welcome in public spaces.

Key themes that have emerged that have directly informed thinking around the strategy include:

- The appreciation of water, nature and greenery.
- A desire for colour, form and pattern.
- An interest in including places for play and interaction.
- The importance of creating places where people can meet and socialise.
- An interest in trails and active wayfinding ideas.
- Understanding the "rules" of using the campus and how this relates to feeling welcome.

The work generated through the engagement process was displayed as part of the Turner Sims Summer Festival 2025 where visitors continued to contribute their ideas and comments about what makes a campus welcoming.





NEQ Community Engagement: Textile banners by Vanessa Rolf with students from Bassett Green Primary School, Cantell School, and Swaythling Primary School, at the Turner Sims Summer Festival, 2025. Image © Nosa Malcolm

The Welcoming Campus: Art, People, and Nature in Dialogue: A Vision for Public Art at NEQ

The NEQ public art strategy draws inspiration from the pioneering vision of Basil Spence, one of the UK's most prominent architects of the 20th century, who was commissioned in the late 1950's to design the Highfield Campus masterplan at the University of Southampton. Spence's work integrated modernist architecture with a profound respect for nature and the built environment, creating a harmonious balance between architecture, landscape, and public art. His vision sought to unite these elements into a cohesive whole, enhancing the experience of the campus and fostering a connection between people and place.

Building on Spence's legacy, this strategy reimagines public art as a connective, community-driven, and ecologically responsive force. Public art will be developed through meaningful engagement with University communities, local partners, and the wider city, encouraging shared ownership, the exchange of knowledge and dialogue. As the NEQ evolves, public art will serve as a unifying thread between the campus's green and blue spaces, reflecting both Spence's vision and the University's ongoing commitment to high-quality design, public art, and sustainability.

This vision fosters a dynamic and welcoming environment where public art enriches campus life, reflecting the values of culture, community, learning and sustainability, through an ongoing dialogue between people, place, and nature.



Aerial view of the Highfield site in 1970
[MS 1/Phot/11/8]



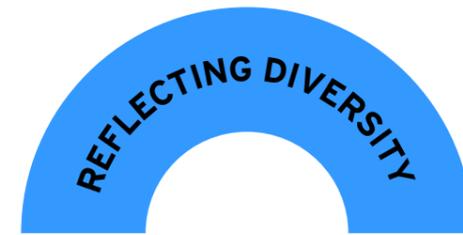
F E Mc Williams, Puy de Dôme Figure
Image © Thierry Bal

PUBLIC ART PRINCIPLES FOR THE NEQ CAMPUS

The following principles are designed to inform the way public art is commissioned at NEQ demonstrating the priorities for how public art can become embedded within the fabric and everyday life of the new campus environment.



Public art at NEQ should act as a unifying force, connecting people across communities, disciplines, and cultures. It should foster collaboration and dialogue, strengthen relationships between the campus and the wider city, and enhance the interplay between the built and natural environment.



Public art at NEQ should reflect the diversity of the campus community, embracing and amplifying a wide range of cultural, social, and historical narratives. The public art at NEQ should be accessible, engaging, and inclusive, providing a space for the diverse campus population to see themselves reflected in the public realm.



Public art should be integrated within the landscape in a way that celebrates and respects the natural environment. Sculptures and installations should not only enhance the aesthetic experience of the campus but also promote engagement with and care for the landscape, celebrating the campus's green and blue spaces both old and new.

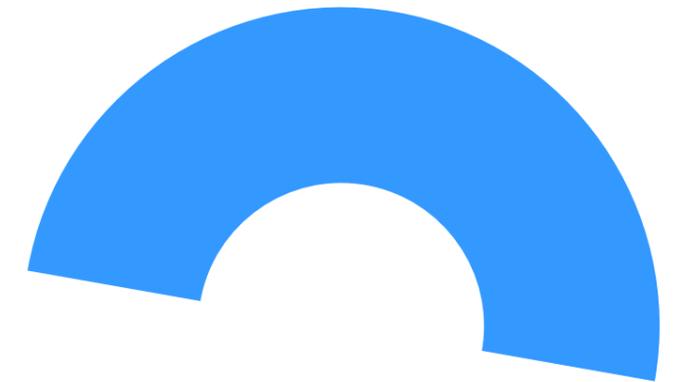


Public art at NEQ should prioritise environmental sustainability from the outset, considering material choices, construction methods, and opportunities to apply emerging knowledge that supports a more sustainable relationship between humans and the natural world. Where possible, artist briefs should encourage narratives that amplify the site's environmental ethos including its approach to sustainable landscape design and water harvesting.

PUBLIC ART THEMES FOR THE NEQ CAMPUS

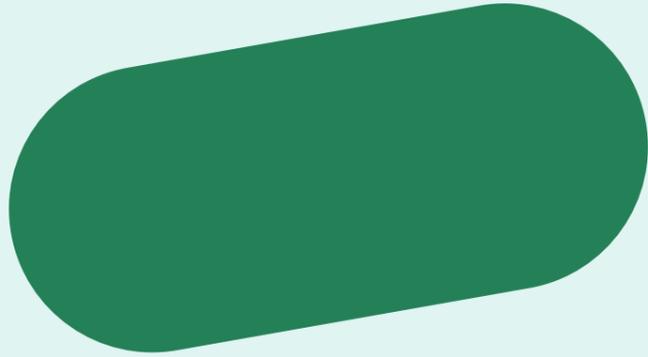
The following themes will play a significant role in shaping the artist briefs created throughout the commissioning process and are evident in the way that the commissioning opportunities have been framed (please see commissioning section that follows). They respond to the character of the University setting (it's strategy and Triple Helix approach), recognise that medical departments will be present at NEQ, and offer stimuli for engagement and exchange.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE



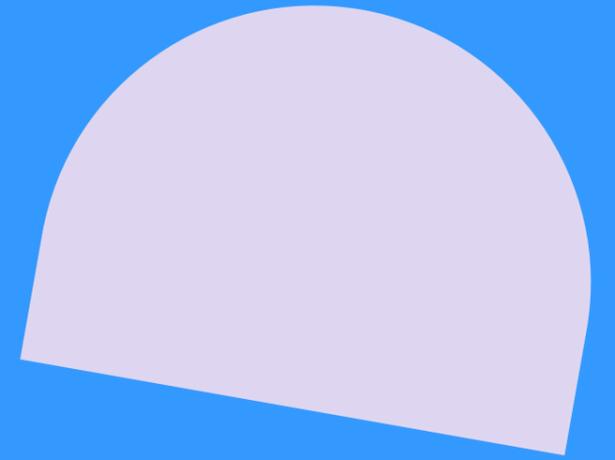
Public art should serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, fostering dialogue and the sharing of ideas between the University, the surrounding city, and its wider communities in a non-hierarchical way. Art should reflect the intellectual vibrancy of the campus while creating spaces for conversation, reflection, and growth.

WELLBEING



Public art should contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of the campus community by offering spaces that promote relaxation, reflection, engagement and connection with nature. Public art can play an essential role in improving the emotional environment, offering moments of pause and calm in an otherwise busy, academic setting.

PLAY



Public art should create an environment where play is an integral part of the campus experience, inviting campus users of all ages to engage with their surroundings in creative and interactive ways. This theme celebrates the potential for art to be dynamic and experiential, encouraging curiosity, interaction, and exploration, offering a respite from academic study.

Public Art Commissioning Opportunities

In the following pages, four distinct commissioning opportunities are outlined. Each aligns with and supports the public art principles and key themes. Details are included of the suggested artist brief, commissioning processes, expected timelines and proposed priority communities required for realising each opportunity. At the end of this section we also highlight key items that will be embedded throughout all artist briefs.

Proposals have been shaped to permeate campus life and have been developed in close collaboration with Sheppard Robson Architects and Fabrik Landscape Design. They represent a mix of activity that also encourages dialogue with the landscape as well as with the University of Southampton and Winchester School of Art. The locations for each commissioning opportunity have been carefully considered and align with wider design aspirations. On the opposite page we outline the suggested sites for each commissioning opportunity before going into more depth about each public artwork proposal.

Commission 1: The Welcoming Campus Commission 2: Play the Campus



Commission 3: Art + Nature: A Sculptural Response Commission 4: Curating the Collection

The Welcoming Campus

Proposed site: Western Gateway and Eastern Gateway

Proposed priority communities: Students & staff (Western Gateway); surrounding communities (Eastern Gateway)

The Welcoming Campus commission integrates public artworks within the two main “gateway” sites to the new North East Quadrant. These two locations are the entry points onto site and represent thresholds for students and staff, who are expected to mainly use the Western Gateway that connects to the wider Highfield Campus, and for surrounding communities who are most likely to use the Eastern Gateway that lies directly opposite residential streets across Burgess Road.

Here, we propose that one artist would be commissioned to work across the two sites, engaging relevant communities (see proposed priority communities above) in the notion of ‘The Welcoming Campus’. Exploring questions such as: What makes communities feel welcome? What does welcoming mean in these two different contexts, what is similar and what is different? And how can boundaries and thresholds become blurred or softened to support the site to become a more welcoming place?

Through dialogue with Fabrik Landscape Design, an opportunity for the public artworks to either be embedded within the paving or be freestanding has been identified. All technical details and constraints will be clearly outlined within the artist brief at commissioning stage, to ensure the appointed artist is aware of key considerations relating to the site, its current design and any constraints.

The proposed commissioning process for this opportunity will follow an artist longlisting and shortlisting process. An artist selection criteria relevant to this opportunity will be assembled that will inform the development of a longlist of artists for consideration. A selection panel made up of key stakeholders including NEQ development managers, Sheppard Robson Architects, Fabrik, John Hansard Gallery, Turner Sims, UP Projects and others as required will work together to shortlist three artists for interview. Interviews will take place in person and an artist will be appointed based on the quality of their previous work and a verbal initial response to the brief. No proposals will be sought or expected during this process therefore no honorarium to artists is envisaged until appointment stage.



Western Gateway render
Courtesy of Sheppard Robson Architects



Eastern Gateway render
Courtesy of Sheppard Robson Architects

PRECEDENT PROJECTS



Images courtesy of The Line, photography by Angus Mill and Amber Hunt

Rana Begum: No.1104 Catching Colour

Installed in 2022 at London City Island's Botanic Square, No.1104 Catching Colour by Rana Begum is a site-specific public artwork that transforms urban space through light, colour, and form. Commissioned by EcoWorld Ballymore and curated by The Line, the work features a suspended grid of coloured mesh panels that respond dynamically to shifting daylight. The intervention fosters a constantly evolving environment, casting vibrant shadows and encouraging pedestrian engagement. Drawing inspiration from the reflective surface of the nearby River Lea, Begum explores themes of fluidity, impermanence, and spatial perception. Her minimalist approach blurs boundaries between sculpture and architecture, turning a transitional public square into a contemplative experience. The project exemplifies how abstract art can enhance placemaking and resonate with local context in meaningful, sensory ways.



Temporal Trace, Lubna Chowdhary

Lubna Chowdhary: Temporal Trace

Installed during London Sculpture Week at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park's Waterfront Square, Temporal Trace reimagines South India's Kolam—a daily rice-flour ritual—as a large-scale floor drawing. Commissioned by the London Legacy Development Corporation and curated by Stratford Waterfront's public realm team, the permanent installation activates the space between V&A East and the London College of Fashion. Chowdhary scales Kolam to human stride, transforming a civic threshold into an interactive pattern inviting walking and play. The work dialogues with other East Bank commissions—echoing site-wide practices like textile design, musical notation, and choreography—to enrich visitor perception of movement and place. Through minimalist heritage-based abstraction, Temporal Trace demonstrates how abstract public art can cultivate welcome, cultural resonance, and sensory engagement in urban placemaking.

PRECEDENT PROJECTS



Wassail, 2018 by S. Mark Gubb at Berkeley Homes Vista Development. Photography: Thierry Bal

S. Mark Gubb: Wassail

S. Mark Gubb, commissioned by UP Projects and Berkeley Homes, delivered Wassail, a cohesive suite of eight experiential way-marker works across the new Vista development in Nine Elms, Battersea. Through extensive research into local history—ranging from Anglo-Saxon artefacts like the Seax of Beagnoth, to Lavender farming, early 20th c. adult education, iconic pop-cultural moments and the former Pleasure Gardens fair—Gubb installed discrete sculptural interventions that both narrate and orient the new neighbourhood. Each “way marker” operates as a visual node: playful, rooted in local memory, and functional, helping residents navigate the landscaped environment. The project typifies Gubb's interdisciplinary approach—melding oral history, popular culture, and spatial design to animate public space. Wassail demonstrates how material fragments of heritage can be integrated into new urban developments to foster community identity, engagement, and informal wayfinding through poetic abstraction.



Image © Nosa Malcolm

Perminder Kaur - Co-Creating Public Space

As part of the 2024 Southampton Mela Festival, Perminder Kaur participated in John Hansard Gallery's Co-Creating Public Space initiative. Commissioned by Art Asia, Southampton City Council and funded by Arts Council England, the project paired Kaur with local artists Ren Woolridge and Rabia Raja to develop a communal sculpture installation at the Southampton Mela. Blending Kaur's sculptural investigation of identity, home and belonging with a community-centered approach, the works invited festival-goers to add personal marks, evolving a collectively shaped monument. This participatory practice transformed a traditional group exhibition into a living, audience-engaged artwork, strengthening civic ties and reflecting the city's diverse South Asian heritage. The project illustrates how collaborative public art can amplify community voice, cultural resonance, and inclusive creative ownership.

Play the Campus

Proposed site: Across the site with locations to be determined but a special focus on gathering and lingering spaces will be emphasised in the brief

Proposed priority communities: Students, local people with involvement from young people

This commission offers a playful response to aid wayfinding across the site and also to encourage participation and interaction between campus users. For *Play the Campus* we propose working with communities to embed a series of play related interventions across the site with a special emphasis placed on locations that are designed as gathering or lingering spaces such as the “learning pods” and the seating outside the main campus building.

Emphasis will be placed on reflecting diversity in the public realm through play, ensuring that, through the community engagement process, games, rituals and modes of play from a wide range of communities are considered and ultimately reflected across the final interventions.

Play is also vital to promote good physical and mental health and a consideration of this will be articulated within the detailed artist brief, exploring how the positive social impact of play can be integrated into both the final artworks as well as the community engagement process. This play-focused wayfinding strategy could also have resonance with the wider Highfield Campus and a connection to the University’s overarching wayfinding strategy will be vital. This strategic wayfinding vision will be incorporated into the detailed artist brief.

The proposed commissioning process for this opportunity will follow an artist longlisting and shortlisting process. An artist selection criteria relevant to this opportunity will be assembled that will inform the development of a longlist of artists for consideration. A selection panel made up of key stakeholders including NEQ development managers, Sheppard Robson Architects, Fabrik, John Hansard Gallery, Turner Sims, UP Projects and others as required will work together to shortlist three artists for interview. The artist will be appointed on the basis of their interview. Interviews will take place in person and an artist will be appointed based on the quality of their previous work and a verbal initial response to the brief. No proposals will be sought or expected during this process therefore no honorarium to artists is envisaged until appointment stage.



Render of North East Quadrant
Courtesy of Shepard Robson Architects



Render of North East Quadrant
Courtesy of Shepard Robson Architects

PRECEDENT PROJECTS



Image © Setouchi Triennale

Jasmina Llobet & Luis Fernández Pons: No One Wins - Multibasket

Installed in 2013 on Teshima Island for the Setouchi Triennale, No One Wins - Multibasket by Jasmina Llobet and Luis Fernández Pons reimagines the traditional basketball court. The sculpture features a Teshima-shaped backboard with six hoops at different heights, each representing one of the island's towns. Its intertwined metal-and-wood design removes standard court lines and rules, encouraging players to invent new ways to play. This playful, functional artwork shifts focus from competition to collaboration, inviting visitors to connect with the landscape and each other. As a permanent installation, it revitalizes underused rural space, fostering community and addressing demographic challenges. By blending art, sport, and social practice, Multibasket transforms recreation into a shared experience where participation matters more than winning.



Dancing on Joseph Grimaldi's Grave, Krokatsis sculpture, YouTube (still): Louis Withans

Henry Krokatsis: Grimaldi

Installed in 2010 at Joseph Grimaldi Park, Islington, Grimaldi by Henry Krokatsis is an interactive public artwork that reimagines the traditional memorial. Comprising two bronze coffin-shaped plates—one dedicated to Joseph Grimaldi and the other to Charles Dibdin—the installation invites visitors to engage physically by stepping or dancing on them. Each plate emits musical notes when activated, allowing participants to play Hot Codlins, a song popularised by Grimaldi. Krokatsis's design challenges conventional notions of permanence and solemnity in memorials, offering a dynamic, participatory experience that honours Grimaldi's legacy as the father of modern clowning. This work exemplifies Krokatsis's approach to public art, blending historical reference with contemporary interaction to create a living tribute.

PRECEDENT PROJECTS



Play for Today. Installation view, Gropius Bau, DE. Photograph by Ranav Adhikari

Céline Condorelli: Play for Today

Play for Today (2022) by Céline Condorelli is a large-scale public installation that transforms a schoolyard into a multi-sport arena. Overlaying courts for badminton, basketball, football, pétanque, volleyball, and a running track, the artwork uses official field markings in bright colours. Embedded within these lines are dates—1920, 1921, 1926, 1952, 1956, and 1977—indicating when women were first permitted to compete in international tournaments for each sport. This temporal mapping highlights the historical exclusion of women from public play spaces. Presented alongside workshops on gender bias and queerness in sport, Play for Today fosters critical dialogue and collective action towards a more inclusive society.



Image © Stephen White

Ghazaleh Avarzamani: Strange Temporalities

Strange Temporalities (2018) by Ghazaleh Avarzamani is an installation that deconstructs a spiral playground slide, dispersing its components into discrete parts. This reassemblage transforms the slide into an unusable and somewhat hazardous structure, challenging the notion of playgrounds as safe spaces for children. The work explores themes of learning and forgetting, growth and erasure, accomplishment and failure, questioning the paradoxical realities behind educational methodologies and cultural norms. By foregrounding play as a mode of thinking, Avarzamani reorients the understanding of the playground as a monument, shedding light on its role as an encoded cultural form.

Art + Nature: A Sculptural Response

Proposed site: Close proximity to the pond on site

Proposed priority communities: Students & academic staff

This commissioning opportunity will continue the University's historic and ongoing relationship with sculpture. Across the wider Highfield Campus there are sculptures by F.E. McWilliam, Barbara Hepworth, Matt Rhoda, and Conrad Shawcross amongst others with these artworks being embedded within the daily life of campus often creating a dialogue between art and nature.

For the *Art + Nature: A Sculptural Response*, the artist brief will centre on creating a sculpture for this 21st Century campus that promotes an active dialogue between art and nature - demonstrating how art can support and coexist with nature. The sculpture will promote users of the campus to see the new pond as a place for contemplation and reflection promoting a connection with nature and its positive effects on mental health and wellbeing.

There may also be opportunity for the artwork to reference the sites narrative around water management and other sustainability credentials. An emphasis on working with natural materials to promote more regenerative ways of creating public art will be embedded within the artist brief also drawing from the University's previous precedent of working with artist, David Nash for his planting sculpture commission *Fire, Engine, Sweep* (1980).

The commissioning process for this artwork will follow an invited proposal development process. A longlist of relevant artists will be assembled responding to a detailed artist selection criteria. A shortlist of three artists will then be invited to develop concept proposals responding to a detailed artist brief. Artists will present their proposals to a selection panel (made of relevant representatives see commissioning process for The Welcoming Campus above) after which one artist will be appointed to take forward the commission based on their concept proposal. Artists will be paid an honorarium to develop proposals in acknowledgement of their time.



Render of North East Quadrant
Courtesy of Shepard Robson Architects



Render of North East Quadrant
Courtesy of Shepard Robson Architects

PRECEDENT PROJECTS



Mary Miss - City as Living Laboratory (CALL)

Mary Miss - City as Living Laboratory (CALL)

Founded in 2008 by artist Mary Miss, City as Living Laboratory (CALL) is an interdisciplinary initiative that integrates art, science, and community engagement to address urban sustainability challenges. CALL employs a collaborative framework where artists lead teams—including scientists, planners, and residents—to create site-specific installations and programs that make environmental issues tangible and accessible. Projects like FLOW: Can You See the River? in Indianapolis and Broadway: 1000 Steps in New York City exemplify CALL's approach, transforming public spaces into interactive learning environments. By fostering dialogue and participation, CALL empowers communities to engage with and take action on pressing ecological concerns, redefining the role of art in urban transformation.



I travelled 66 million years to be with you and then you came by Anne Duk Hee Jordan. Photo: Simon Tutty

Anne Duk Hee Jordan - I travelled 66 million years to be with you and then you came

I travelled 66 million years to be with you and then you came (2025) by Anne Duk Hee Jordan is an ecological sculpture presented by UP Projects that explores the deep temporal connections between humans and the natural environment. The work reflects on vast geological time and human migration, emphasizing the intertwined material histories of bodies, water, and landscape. Through its form and presence, the sculpture invites viewers to contemplate their place within evolutionary and environmental processes, fostering a sense of shared vulnerability, resilience, and belonging across time.

PRECEDENT PROJECTS



Tame Buzzard Line, 2001

The Work of Richard Long

Richard Long is a pioneering British artist known for his innovative use of natural materials to create sculptures that engage directly with the landscape. His work often involves arranging stones, mud, branches, and earth into simple, yet powerful forms that highlight the relationship between humans and nature. Long's sculptures are typically site-specific, created outdoors and left to change with time, emphasizing impermanence and natural processes. A key example is his iconic "A Line Made by Walking" (1967), where he repeatedly walked a path to create a visible line in the grass, blending performance and sculpture. Long's practice invites viewers to reconsider their environment, encouraging a deeper awareness of nature's beauty and fragility through minimal, contemplative interventions.



Ash Dome, David Nash

The Work of David Nash

David Nash is a British sculptor known for his profound engagement with natural materials, particularly wood. His practice involves working directly with trees and timber, often using traditional techniques like charring, cutting, and carving to reveal the material's innate qualities. Nash's sculptures emphasize transformation and the passage of time, reflecting natural cycles of growth, decay, and regeneration. Works such as "Ash Dome," where he shaped ash trees into a living sculpture, demonstrate his deep connection to nature and the environment. By integrating natural processes into his art, Nash highlights the interdependence between humans and the landscape, inviting viewers to contemplate sustainability and ecological balance. His sculptures are both objects and ongoing conversations with the natural world.

Curating the Collection

Proposed site: Within the Learning Building

Proposed priority communities: MA Contemporary Curating students at Winchester School of Art

Though art in outdoor public spaces has been prioritised within this strategy, there is scope to involve students from Winchester School of Art in the curation of artworks to be hung and displayed within the Learning Building on site. Sheppard Robson Architects as well as the University's Head of Collections Engagement have expressed willingness to work in this way.

MA Contemporary Curating is a full-time, one-year, or part-time, two-year course at Winchester School of Art that is focused on curating compelling narratives through exhibitions as well as applying critical thinking around the display of art that challenges audiences to think differently. The brief to the MA Contemporary Curating students will be to work closely with the University Library's Head of Collections Engagement as well as Sheppard Robson Architects to understand the scope of artworks that can be displayed as well as sites for exhibiting across the Learning Building. They will then be tasked to curate a permanent display from the University's existing collection that responds to the vision, principles and themes as outlined in this strategy.

Initial conversations have been had with all parties with an in-principle agreement to collaborate once approval of this public art strategy is in place. There is scope to also consider a rolling programme of window displays within the new Learning Building though further conversations would be required to ensure there is resource available to facilitate this as well as agreement from future operators that may occupy the building (such as the café operator for example). A rolling window display was highlighted through the community engagement activity as a way to make communities feel more welcome within the building which will be publicly accessible, so would continue to be an aspiration if deemed viable.

Artist Briefs

For each of the commissioning opportunities a detailed artist brief will be compiled supported by technical information and material supplied by Sheppard Robson Architects and Fabrik Landscape Design.

In addition, the following points will be emphasised across all artist briefs:

- A necessity to respond to the overarching priorities and themes as outlined within the public art strategy for NEQ.
- An encouragement to collaborate with University academics and departments as relevant to the development of their work.
- The potential for artists to make use of University laboratories and facilities to support the creation of artworks.
- A necessity to create artworks through processes that actively engage priority communities (as outlined above) and support knowledge exchange, learning and social value creation.
- An emphasis on considering environmental sustainability when developing public art proposals.
- The importance of reflecting diversity within the public realm.
- The necessity to consider management and maintenance of the artworks from the outset.

Commissioning Timeline

The following timeline aligns with the current construction timeline. It assumes that planning permission will be granted as part of the wider approvals for the NEQ via amendments. Should full planning permission be required for any of the artworks timelines may be subject to change.

2025

- Public art strategy submitted to Southampton City Council for review.
- Upon approval of the public art strategy, UP Projects appointed to deliver on the commissioning opportunity framework.
- Assembly of NEQ public art steering panel of relevant representatives.
- Evaluation framework developed together with the University of Southampton's Institute for Arts & Humanities.
- Detailed planning and develop for all commissions begin, including the assembly of detailed artist briefs.
- Artist selection processes undertaken.
- All artists appointed.

2026

- Curating the Collection programme begins with MA Contemporary Curating students (January - March).
- Community engagement activity relevant to *Play the Campus*, *The Welcoming Campus* and *Art + Nature: A Sculptural Response* takes place. Please note each appointed artist will develop a detailed engagement plan relating to their individual commission.
- *Play the Campus*, *The Welcoming Campus* and *Art + Nature: A Sculptural Response* proposal development begins working closely with wider design team (Sheppard Robson Architectures and Fabrik Landscape Design).
- Final artwork designs signed off by client.
- Detailed designs passed by Southampton City Council for approval.
- Fabrication and installation of final artworks dovetailed to overarching construction programme.

2027

- Final fabrication and installation of artworks as required.
- All artworks delivered on site.
- Launch activity curated as required.

Evaluation in Action

At the heart of the approach outlined in this public art strategy is a commitment to social practice, ensuring that communities (as outlined under the priority communities' section) are involved and engaged through the process of creating new public artworks for the NEQ of Highfield Campus. This approach embeds opportunities for social value creation focusing on but not limited to new skills development, learning and knowledge exchange. In addition, the focus on creating a welcoming place that supports wellbeing is also envisioned to positively impact future users of the site.

Measuring the impact of commissioning public art at NEQ will become a live and deeply embedded process facilitated through a partnership with the University's Southampton Institute for Arts & Humanities (SIAH) and Centre for Higher Educational Practice (CHEP). SIAH is an interdisciplinary institute that has generated specialist approaches to using culture and creative practice. They develop projects that engage with place and place-shaping, community engagement and inclusion, economics and civic regeneration, public health and wellbeing, and environmental literacies and behaviours.

SIAH and CHEP have developed the University's new Social Value Framework. They have expressed a commitment to work closely with UP Projects to use this framework as a basis for measuring the social impact of this public strategy and the resulting public art commissions. The framework will establish clear indicators of success and a methodology for monitoring them. All relevant data and feedback will be captured throughout the public art programme to support a thorough evaluation of the social impact of public art commissioning at NEQ once all commissions have been realised.

Governance

A Public Art Steering Panel will be assembled to support the successful delivery of this public art strategy once approved by Southampton City Council. Members of this steering panel will be agreed and invited once approval is granted and is envisaged to include representation from the below.

- NEQ Development Director
- Existing Public Art Steering Group Members
- Estates Management
- Southampton City Council (Culture & Planning teams)
- Turner Sims
- John Hansard Gallery
- MA Contemporary Curating
- Representative from Public Engagement with Research unit / Civic
- Representative from Libraries & Collections
- Representation from University of Southampton Student Union
- Community representation (to be identified)
- Independent Artist Advisor (to be identified)

A clear Terms of Reference for the steering panel will be assembled and disseminated upon creation and selected members. Terms will include role and responsibilities of the panel, ways of working as well as details concerning confidentiality. Any community representatives or independent/freelance consultants included in the steering panel will be paid for their involvements.

Select members of the steering panel will also be involved in the artist selection processes as outlined above.

Credits

The Welcoming Campus: Art, People, and Nature in Dialogue has been written and developed by UP Projects for the University of Southampton with strategic input from its cultural venues, Turner Sims and John Hansard Gallery.

With thanks to the NEQ Public Art Steering Group and the NEQ Board.

The following organisations and individuals have been involved in the shaping of this strategy:

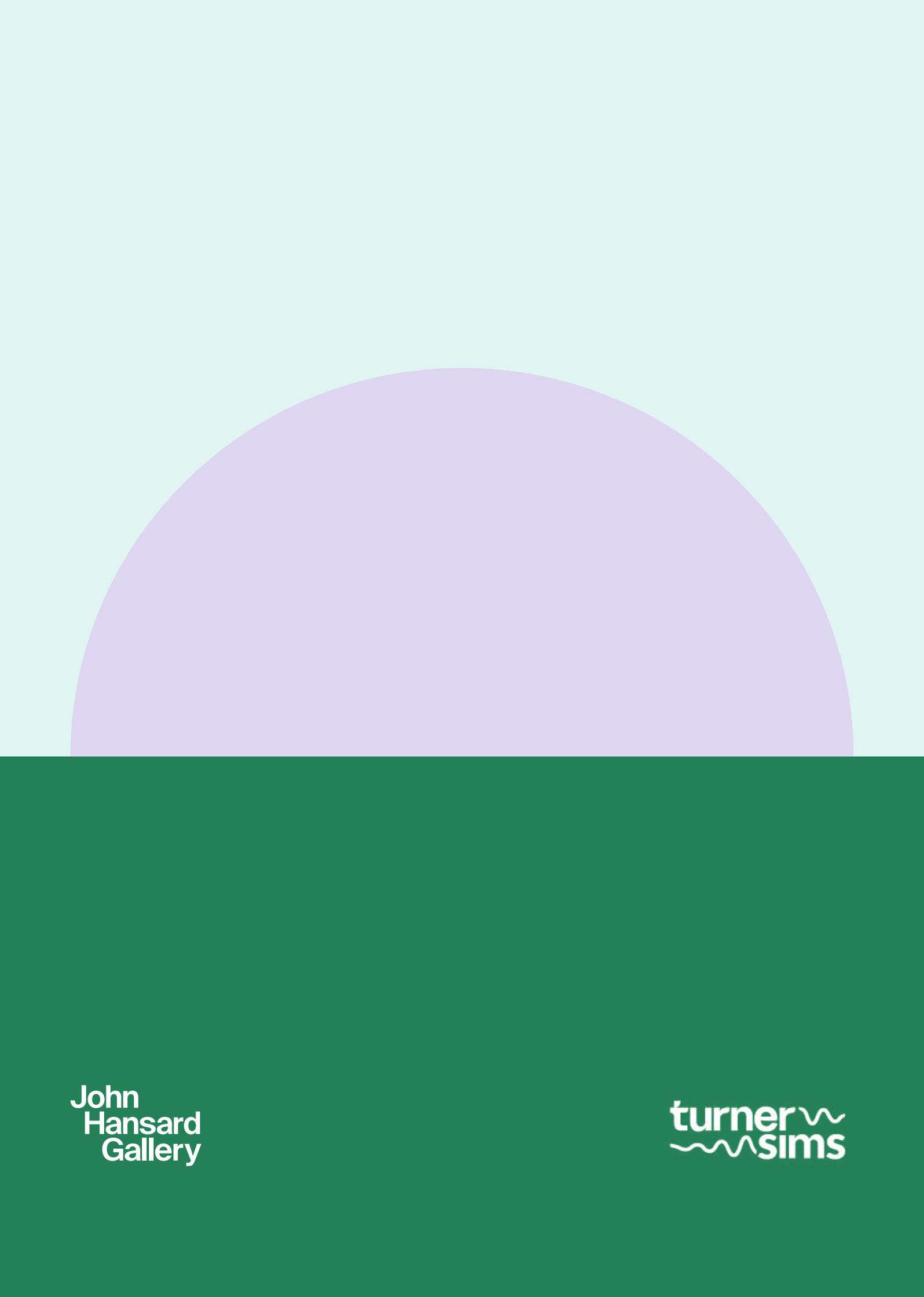
- Basset Green Primary School
- Buro Four
- Bidwells
- Cantell School
- Catherine Polley, Head of Collections Engagement
- Dr Alexandra Reynolds, Senior Teaching Fellow in Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise (KEE) Centre for Higher Education Practice
- Dr Ronda Gowland-Pryde, Senior Civic, Community and Public Engagement Manager, Public Engagement with Research unit / Civic
- Emma Underhill, Founder & Artistic Director, UP Projects
- Fabrik Landscape Design
- Jack Newbury, Producer (Learning & Participation), UP Projects
- Jessica Santer, Head of Engagement and Participation, Turner Sims
- Keith Butler, Director of Special Projects, NEQ & Residences
- Louise Coysh, Director, Turner Sims
- Lynne Dick, Head of Programme (Engagement & Learning), John Hansard Gallery
- Mala Yamey, Curator, UP Projects
- Moira Lascelles, Executive Director & Head of Partnerships, UP Projects
- Professor Nicky Marsh, Professor of Contemporary Literary and Cultural Studies
- Professor Miguel Mera, Dean Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Ros Carter, Head of Programme (Senior Curator), John Hansard Gallery
- Sara Roberts, Programme Leader, MA Contemporary Curating
- Sheppard Robson Architects
- SUSU (Southampton University Student Union)
- Swaythling Primary School
- Swaythling Neighbourhood Centre
- Thursdays Together at St Alban's Church
- Turner & Townsend Alinea
- Vanessa Rolf, Artist
- Wendy White, Director of Library and Learning Services
- Woodrow Kernohan, Director, John Hansard Gallery
- Winchester School of Art

Links to Supporting Documents

- [Art People and Places: Southampton Public Art Strategy](#)
- [Southampton Together: Southampton's Culture Strategy 2021-2031](#)
- [University of Southampton Strategy](#)
- [University of Southampton Triple Helix](#)
- [University of Southampton EDI Strategy](#)
- [University of Southampton sustainability strategy](#)
- [University Art Collection](#)



NEQ Community Engagement artwork by Vanessa Rolf and pupils from Cantell School, 2025



John
Hansard
Gallery

turner 
 SIMS