

ROSIE McGUIRE

TITLE: HITCHIN HIGH LINE

SITE: HITCHIN LIBRARY, PAYNES PARK,  
HITCHIN, HERTS UK

EMAIL: [rosiebmccguire@gmail.com](mailto:rosiebmccguire@gmail.com)

TEL: +44 (0)7969 669364

BRIEF: 3 day personal project to design  
a solution to the problem of pedestrian  
access to the town library.

# INTRODUCTION

Hitchin library sits in the grounds of old Charnwood House. It is a three minute walk from the town centre but is essentially cut off by the busy A505 which almost encircles the grounds. There are two pedestrian crossings. The one that serves the most foot traffic is 30 yards up the road from where most people would choose to cross.

The buildings comprise of the 60s Modernist architecture of the library, connected to the early Victorian building of the museum (which has since closed down). The building is classed as surplus to requirements by the local council. The Library roof is flat which could potentially suit a green roof installation.

I chose this site for a three day landscape architecture project because of my own experience as an inhabitant of Hitchin and user of the library.

I considered which part of my town was in most need of redesigning and the library is the most obvious location because it hardly occurs to me to go there. It is just outside the town centre and takes a couple of minutes to walk but because of the presence of the A505 ring road, access is not particularly easy or enjoyable.

The library 'feels' inaccessible even though there is a pedestrian crossing further up the road. Having observed other library users access the site, the majority take a chance by running across the road when the coast is clear.

Having brought up two children in the town, I often had reason to go to the library but the job is made more of a challenge when you need to get pushchairs over the road. Wheelchair access is, I presume, equally frustrating.

For most people in the town, the library is not on its way to anywhere. The pleasure of 'popping in' as you walk past is not present for the library user. The notion of 'browsing' is therefore removed. You must instead make a very conscious effort to go there. I believe this has a detrimental effect on the number of library users.

For the purposes of this project I am of course assuming that the town council would give up one of its car parks and since this is merely a strip of tarmac, I have decided to transform this into an extension of the gardens that surround the library.

The main part of the design proposal is a High Line inspired walkway over the A505, connecting the library and town centre.





# LOCATION



The Library. Built in 1965. The frieze shows key moments in Hitchin's history



The museum, now closed down, was originally Charnwood House on the site known as Payne's Park



The William Ransom Physic Garden



View from the library entrance





# INSPIRATION

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

1. The High Line in New York, collaboration between James Corner Field Operations (Project Lead), Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Piet Oudolf.

2. Resting place along the High Line.

3. Seoul, by Dutch architecture firm MRVDV

4. Living root bridges, Northeast Indian state of Meghalaya.

5. Stuttgart's Garden Bridge: Built 1977 for the National Garden Show in Stuttgart, Germany designed by Prof. Hans Luz.



# SITE SURVEY ecology



Yew Tree



Beech Tree

Physic Garden



Horse Chestnut



Ginkgo Tree



Yew Tree

From my rough sketches and preliminary site survey, I think the trees could be retained. One Yew tree is at risk of being in the way of the High Line however.

The presence of the yew trees provide solid shade and add a sense of history and permanence. I consider them integral to the landscape around the library as they act as a historical link to the early Victorian Museum building; Charnwood House.

The Horse Chestnut tree is located on the roundabout and is therefore inaccessible to pedestrians. Planting one on the existing carpark at the start of the walkway would be a child friendly addition to the site and provide excellent shade in the summer months.

The addition of hedges around the perimeter of the library grounds would reduce pollution for people enjoying the grounds and provide a sound buffer from the heavy traffic.

Yew or Beech hedgerows would be in keeping with the existing ecology.



# SITE SURVEY pedestrians & roads

Plan view of Hitchin Library and now derelict museum, highlighting the main road one way system and the isolating effect it has on the library.

Potential footpath links to the market square and Hitchin's town centre are in red.





# SKETCH 01

Sketch elevation showing south facing front of Library, old museum and 'Hitchin High Line'



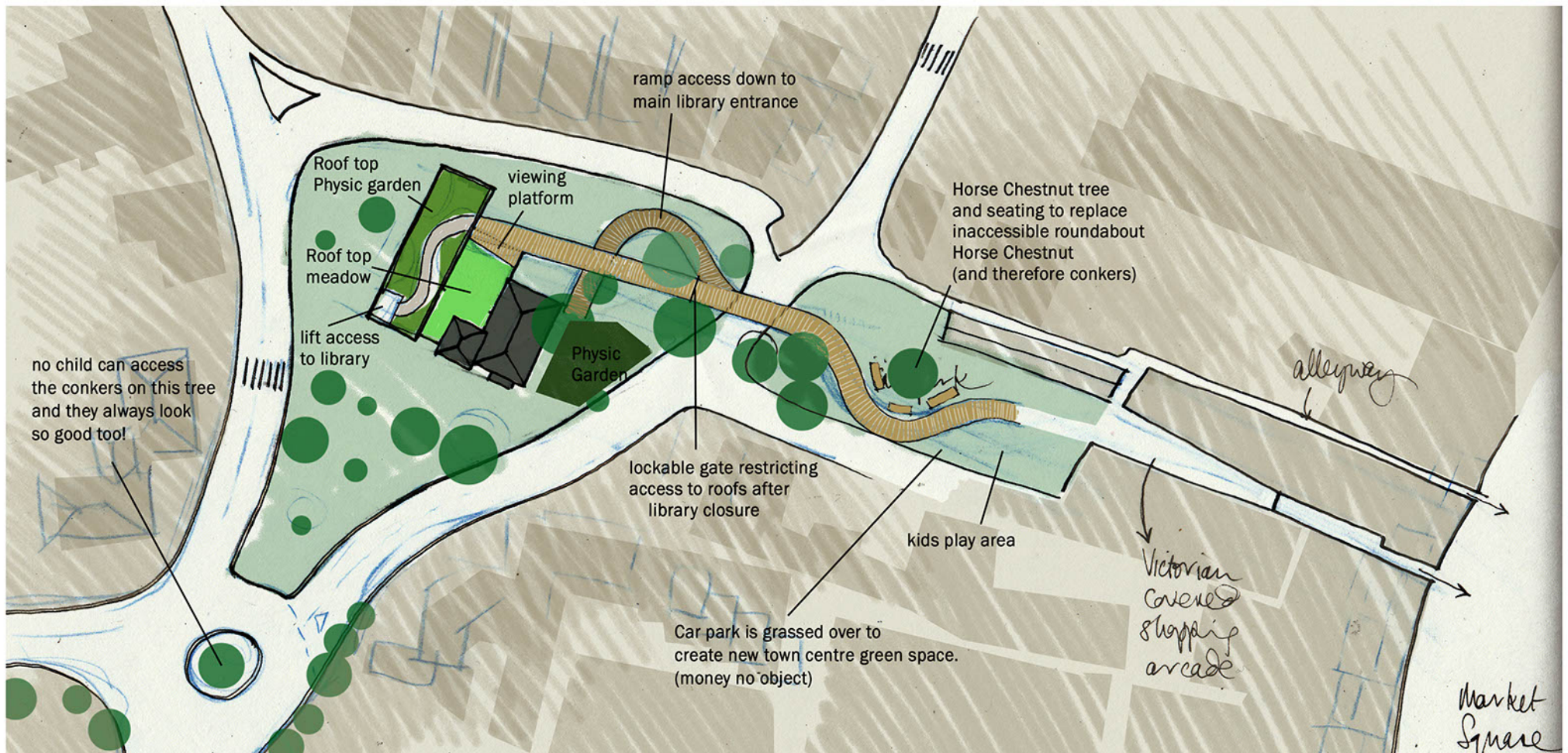


## SKETCH 02

Hitchin High Line. Connecting the town centre and library via high wooden walkway lined with plants and leading to two types of green roof on the library.

Accessing the library by crossing the busy road or walking through a car park will no longer be an issue with the bridge.  
Extending the green zone to the town centre side of the bridge will help to alleviate the disconnect between the two sides of the A505

Lavender will feature heavily along the walkway as growing this crop is part of Hitchin's heritage.





# GREEN ROOF 01: meadow



Biodiversity meadow roof at PWC, London Bridge

## POSSIBLE PLANT SPECIES:

Sheep's Fescue grass	Wild carrot
Autumn Hawkbit	White Campion
Bladder Campio	Clustered Bellflower
Common Sorrel	Small Scabious
Cowslip	Thrift
Lady Bedstraw	Birdsfoot trefoil
Meadowsweet	Common Knapweed
Perforate St John's Wort	Common Toadflax
Ribwort Plantain	Greater Hawkbit
Tufted Vetch	Meadow Cranebill
Wild Red Clover	Ox Eye Daisy
Black Medick	Red Campion
Rough Hawksbit	Self Heal
Wild Pansy	Wild Marjoram
Betony	Yarrow
Cats Ear	Hoary Plantain
Common Vetch	Vipers Bugloss
Field Scabious	
Meadow Buttercup	
Musk Mallow	
Ragged Robin	
Salad Burnet	

This green roof would be viewed from the viewing platform set a few feet above the meadow to get a clear view of the whole roof.

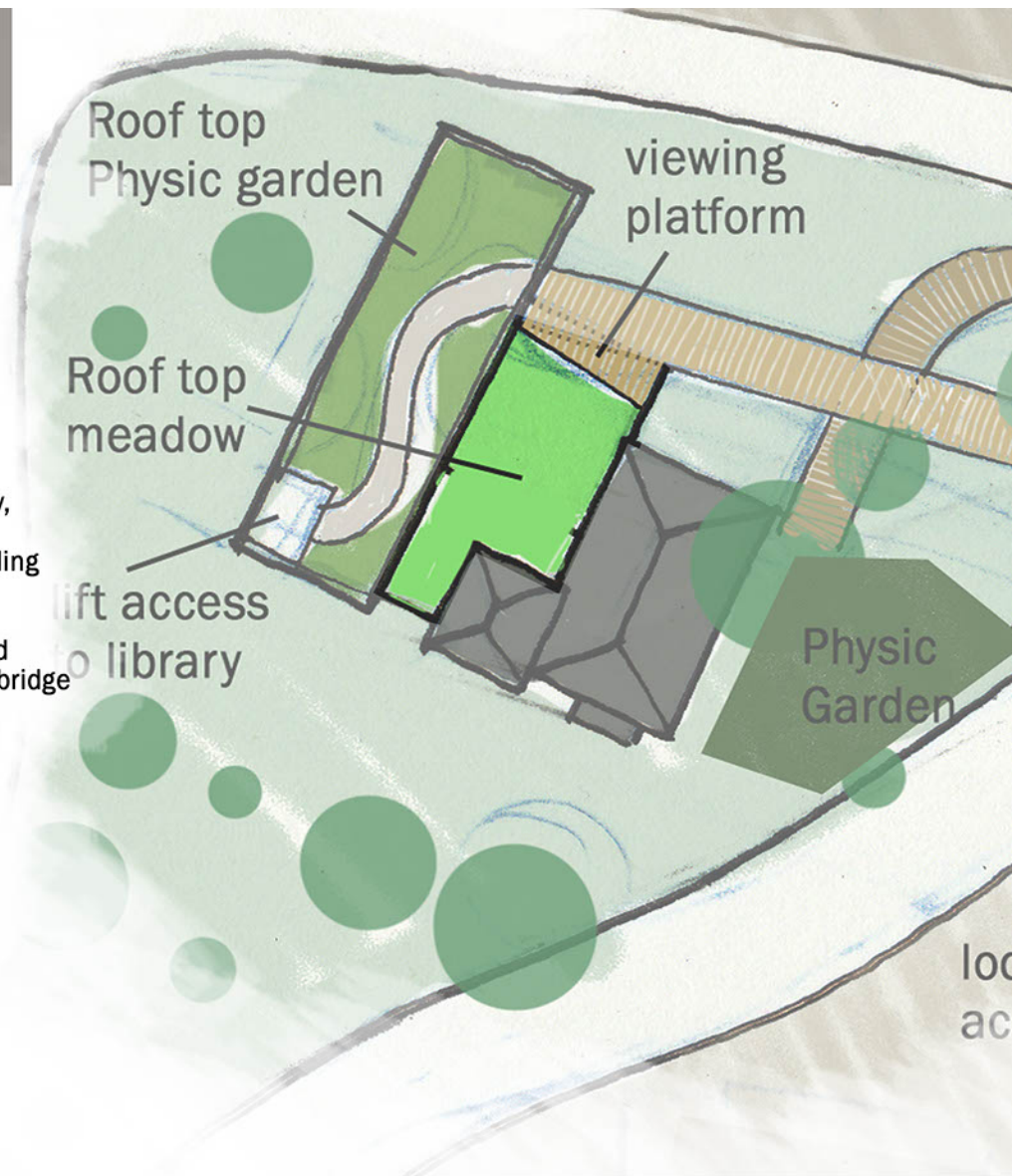
This is accessed by the walkway that culminates in the second roof garden which by contrast can be walked on.

The meadow would improve biodiversity, reduce storm water run off, improve thermal insulation for the building and act as an educational tool.

A secondary ground level meadow could be established on the town side of the bridge to further establish a physical link between the two zones.

Log piles, bug hotels and so on, would help to encourage wildlife.

The roof itself would be an extensive, lightweight green roof.





# GREEN ROOF #2: Physic Garden

This larger intensive green roof will feature a walkway through the garden culminating in a lift / staircase to the library. This would only be open during library opening hours

The garden will feature a number of species from the original Physic Garden but the focus will be more on providing a multi sensory experience and use as an educational tool.

The students of William Ransom Primary School would be involved in the design process.

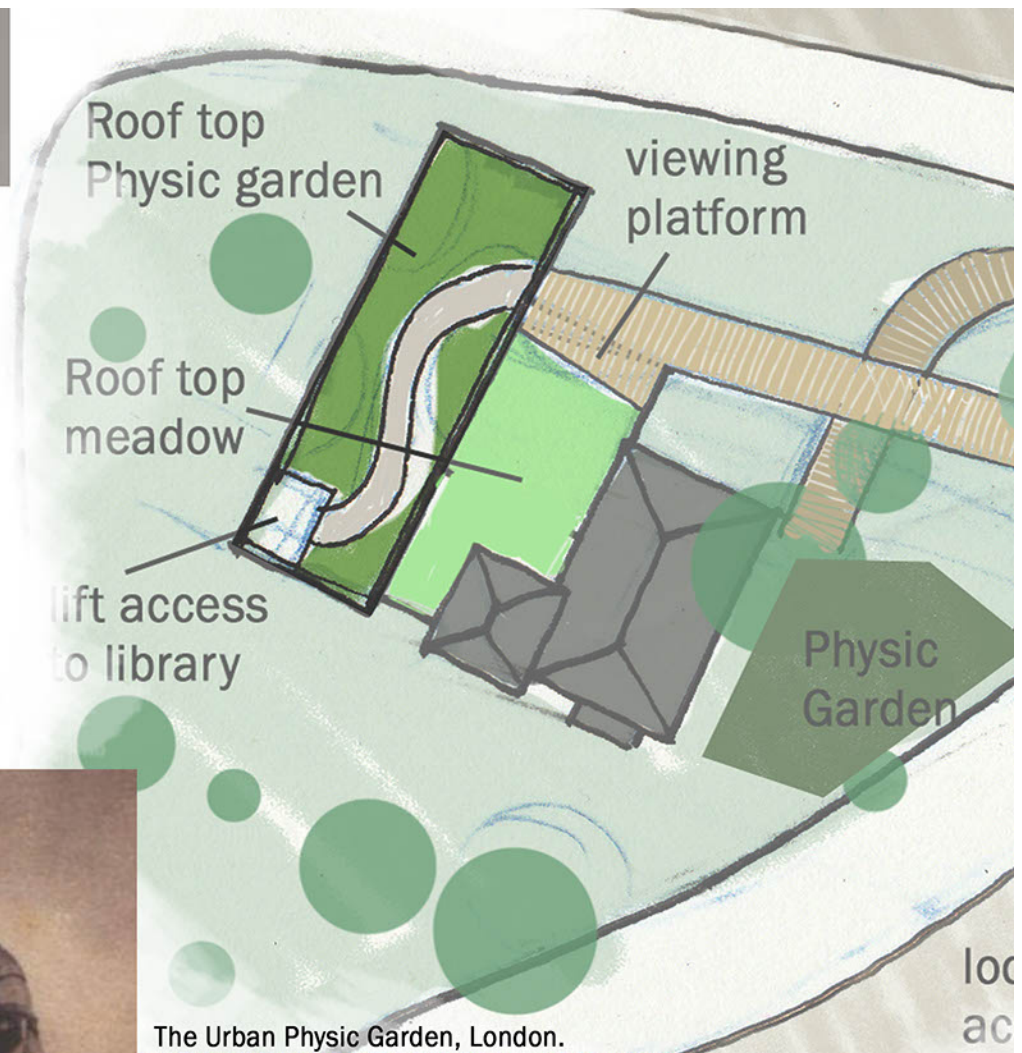
<http://www.physicgarden.org.uk/> The Urban Physic Garden would be a key influence in designing a Physic Garden for the 21st Century.

## POSSIBLE PLANTS SPECIES:

Lemon Thyme	Cone Flower
Common Thyme	Field Poppy
Red Pyrethrum	Meadow Saffron
Hyssop	Elecampane
Rosemary	Thunberg's Barberry
Soapwort	Golden Lemon Balm
Fleabane	Pasque Flower
Purple Sage	Marigold
Flax	Bloodroot
Angelica	Primrose
Chamomile	Male Fern
Dog Rose	Liverleaf
Columbine	Gravelroot
Thyme	Butcher's Broom
False Hellebore	Hart's Tongue Fern
Foxglove	Evening Primrose
Heartsease	Clary Sage
Yarrow	Peppermint
Jacob's Ladder	Scabious
Christmas Rose	Woad
Peony	Cornflower
Opium Poppy	Hitchin Pippin
Avens	Bergamot
Golden Feverfew	Fennel



William Ransom. A hlocal influential pioneer of researching and anlysing botanicals.



The Urban Physic Garden, London.

