

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

PUBLIC ART COMMISSION: ARTIST'S BRIEF AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Background

1.1 Pilot Project:

Tales of the River project is part of Watford Borough Council's groundbreaking 10-year programme to restore the River Colne, a rare chalk river, one of only around 200 in the world. Not only has the river shaped the Watford we know today with its rich history, it is also a vital corridor for wildlife cutting through an urban landscape, it also has potential to once again be a valuable outdoor space for the whole community to enjoy. The 'Landscape strategy & access improvement' report Rediscovering the River Colne September 2020 created by our programme partner Groundwork highlighted there were many opportunities for introducing arts and heritage to the river corridor involving professional artists and the local community.

We recognized that the restoration of the River Colne requires a long-term commitment from our partners and the community to protect this valuable asset for generations to come. Our challenge has been to try and restore an appreciation of our forgotten river for Watford's long-standing residents along with reaching out to our newer diverse community. In October 2022 Watford Borough Council (WBC) were successfully awarded National Lottery Heritage Funding (NLHF) to deliver 'Tales of the River'. This project tells the next chapter in the river's story through a programme of events and activities between March 2023 and August 2025, designed to strengthen links between the river's natural and industrial heritage and the communities that live, work, and spend time in and around Watford.

One of the approved purposes for this project is to commission a new public art installation which must be delivered ahead of the end of the project in August 2025.

Further information about the project can be found here

<https://www.rivercolnewatford.co.uk/>

1.2 The Commission

The objective of this commission is to deliver an individual or series of permanent public artworks which respond to the creative writing elements of Tales of the River.

Since January 2024, two Artist led Creative writing and Poetry workshop series have been delivered ,engaging a multigenerational community Scout group and a group of local Primary school children.

We envision the outputs of these projects to inspire the Public Art piece and are open to ideas such as using text, oral histories and images to respond to these with a focus on natural and locally sourced materials.

For a film related to the workshops please follow this link: <https://youtu.be/fpUDN9Odbn8>

As part of this project the council has commissioned writers to deliver two pieces of written poetry to accompany the participants' work. We are keen to reflect on this work through the artist's approach and would encourage this to inspire their vision.

The client is Watford Borough Council. The project will be project managed by the council's Arts Development Officers, who will provide project support in terms of planning permission and sign off.

Watford Borough Council has recently produced a Public Art Strategy and associated Public Art Commissioning Toolkit. This commission will incorporate the testing of processes outlined in the Toolkit and will strive to adopt the principles set out in the Strategy. **See Appendix 1.**

1.3 Suggested Sites

Some areas have been identified as particular impact with regards to the wider project and activity. The Radlett Road destination area being of particular interest other sites of some interest are Knutsford and Riverside following along the trail left by existing pieces. **See Appendix 2.**

Applicants will be invited to a site tour of the area and discussion on the project so far (see timeline)

2. Approach

This opportunity is for an artist to work collaboratively with the council project team to build and deliver an engaging and inspiring piece of art that enhances the area and reflects the Creative writing elements through this unique and collaborative NHLF project.

As outlined within the project outcomes so far, we invite artists and creative practitioners to interrogate this unique site, respond to the writing and make proposals for innovative ways to celebrate and reimagine what the River Colne could offer.

We are open to the artist's own approach on material and style and strongly encourage approaches that reflect the writing and writing outreach activities which have already been carried out. **See Appendix 2.**

3.0 Specific commission requirements:

Create an artwork or series of artworks that:

- Has a design life of at least 10 years
- Robust materials
- Require minimal maintenance
- Access and Inclusion for all
- Consideration of sustainable materials where possible

The successful artist will be required to work in liaison with the council project team and should allow for at least one meeting a month with the project group during the design development period.

There will be a client meeting to decide whether to go ahead with the initial proposals before the detailed design work and fabrication starts.

Part of this process will include assisting in the preparation of and participating in any presentations to Watford Borough Council as required, for the purpose of planning consent and internal sign off.

The final design, materials / finishes are subject to discussion/agreement with and the approval of the Client

3.1 Budget

The budget for the commissions is £13,000 (+ VAT) to cover:

- . artist's fee and any fees/payments to assistant(s), travel, studio expenses, technical / CAD drawings, digital / sound files and admin costs
- . on-going liaison with the Client to realise this commission

- . participation in any presentations to the Client
- . Planning and any other consents
- . All fabrication and installation of the work with associate costs and insurances.
- . Budget, and all costs will be managed by the Artist. Some support will be provided by the client’s project team.

This commission was made possible with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund with thanks to National Lottery Players.

3.2 Project Timeline

Site tour	TBC
Submission Proposals by Artists	3pm Thursday 9 th January 2025
Shortlisted Artists invited to present	Friday 17 th January 2025
Presentations	Monday 27 th January 2025
Award of contract	Early February
Project Development (with mtgs. as required)	March 2025
Design Finalised and Agreed	Spring 2025
Fabrication	Spring 2025
Installation	Spring/Summer 2025

4. Artist’s Proposal requirements

- i. The following information is required in order to evaluate the Proposal. A brief visual and written proposal responding to the brief and outlining your approach. To include your concept and relation to the curatorial theme /project activity and themes. (no more than 4 sides of A4)
- ii. Evidence of similar projects delivered, including collaborations,

with their budget and processes involved.

- iii. Please note we may ask for references from previous commissions as well.
- iv. A pricing schedule detailing full costs for completing the work.
- v. A proposed timescale for completing the work such as a gantt chart.

5. Evaluation approach

The Contract will be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous and qualitative Tender to the Council. The Council's decision to accept or reject a Tender will be in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the provisions of the Local Government Acts 1988 and 1992 and the various Regulations and Guidance issued there under.

Prior to evaluating the Tenders, the Council will carry out an initial review to confirm completeness and compliance with the Tender requirements and may, at its discretion, reject a Tender which is incomplete and/or non-compliant.

The Council has established an evaluation methodology and will be carrying out the evaluation of Tenders by applying the methodology set out below.

The Council reserves the right to make contact with and visit supplied references.

Tenders that do not contain all complete and correct information (including supporting evidence for evaluation purposes) may be rejected by the Council. The Council does not undertake to award the Contract to the lowest priced or any tender, and reserves the right to cancel or withdraw the Procurement at any stage; and/or not to award a Contract.

5.1 Evaluation methodology

Quality scores will be determined against the following criteria.

Score	Rating	Criteria for Assessing Score
5	Excellent	The bidder has provided a response that fully meets requirements, is robust and supported by suitable and relevant evidence of experience and technical and professional ability. Furthermore, the response demonstrably exceeds or adds value above the Council's stated requirements.
4	Good	The bidder has provided a response that is robust and supported by suitable and relevant evidence of experience and technical and professional ability. It fully meets requirements.

Score	Rating	Criteria for Assessing Score
3	Satisfactory	The response is compliant and the bidder has provided responses that demonstrate they nearly meet the requirements but there is some detail lacking in the response. The response has not fully met requirements.
2	Fair	The response is generic. The bidder has provided insufficient response or the response given demonstrates limited experience and limited technical and professional ability to meet the Council's requirements
1	Poor	The bidder has provided wholly insufficient responses or the response given demonstrates very limited experience and insufficient technical and professional ability to meet the Council's requirements. Should any potential bidder be allocated with this score, its bid submission may be rejected.
0	Unacceptable	The bidder has not answered the question, has omitted information or has provided information that is not relevant and the Council is unable to determine whether the bidder possesses sufficient technical and professional ability. Should any potential bidder be allocated with this score, its bid submission may be rejected.

Cost scores will be determined by awarding the bidder providing the lowest overall net cost to the Council maximum points and other Bidders will be awarded points on a pro-rata basis.

5.2 Evaluation Criteria and Weightings

Tenders will be evaluated against the following criteria and weightings:

Price	Value is weighed against other evaluation points with lowest cost awarding most points.	10%
Quality		
	<p><u>Method statement</u> Describe how you will approach and deliver this project including :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please outline how you combine quality, health and safety and environmental management into the project delivery. • Outline roles and responsibilities of all key staff involved in delivering the project. • Describe how you will ensure this project is delivered on time and in budget 	30%
	<p><u>The Proposal</u></p> <p>Sketches and outline of Offer We will be looking at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and depth of the proposed approach to the commission, such as understanding of the commission and wider project. • Initial drawing(s) of piece(s) with initial idea on measurements (not expected to scale at this stage). • Understanding of where the piece(s) will be placed and how it will 	50%



	<p>fit into the area(s).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why the style of the piece has been chosen. • Explanation of any symbolism/wording. • How the Tales of the River Colne written pieces have influenced your piece(s). • Any historical or contextual information on or around the piece(s) or approach. 	
	<p><u>Experience</u> Provide evidence of three projects of the same or similar scale and content that you have completed in the past 5 years. Your submission should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of the works/Client brief - Client details - Contract value - Programme - Provide details of previous contracts - Evidence of satisfactory completion - Provide reference details for at least three projects, including contact information 	<p>Pass or Fail</p>
<p><u>Supply Chain and Social Value</u></p>	<p>Please detail any opportunities for local collaboration, local and ethical procurement of materials and the accessibility of your process and/or piece. Or evidence of where social value has been implemented of projects of the same or similar size which you have previously worked on. Community Engagement</p>	<p>10%</p>

All information for the Selection Panel should be sent in advance to the arts development team:

lewis.butler@watford.gov.uk



6. Presentations

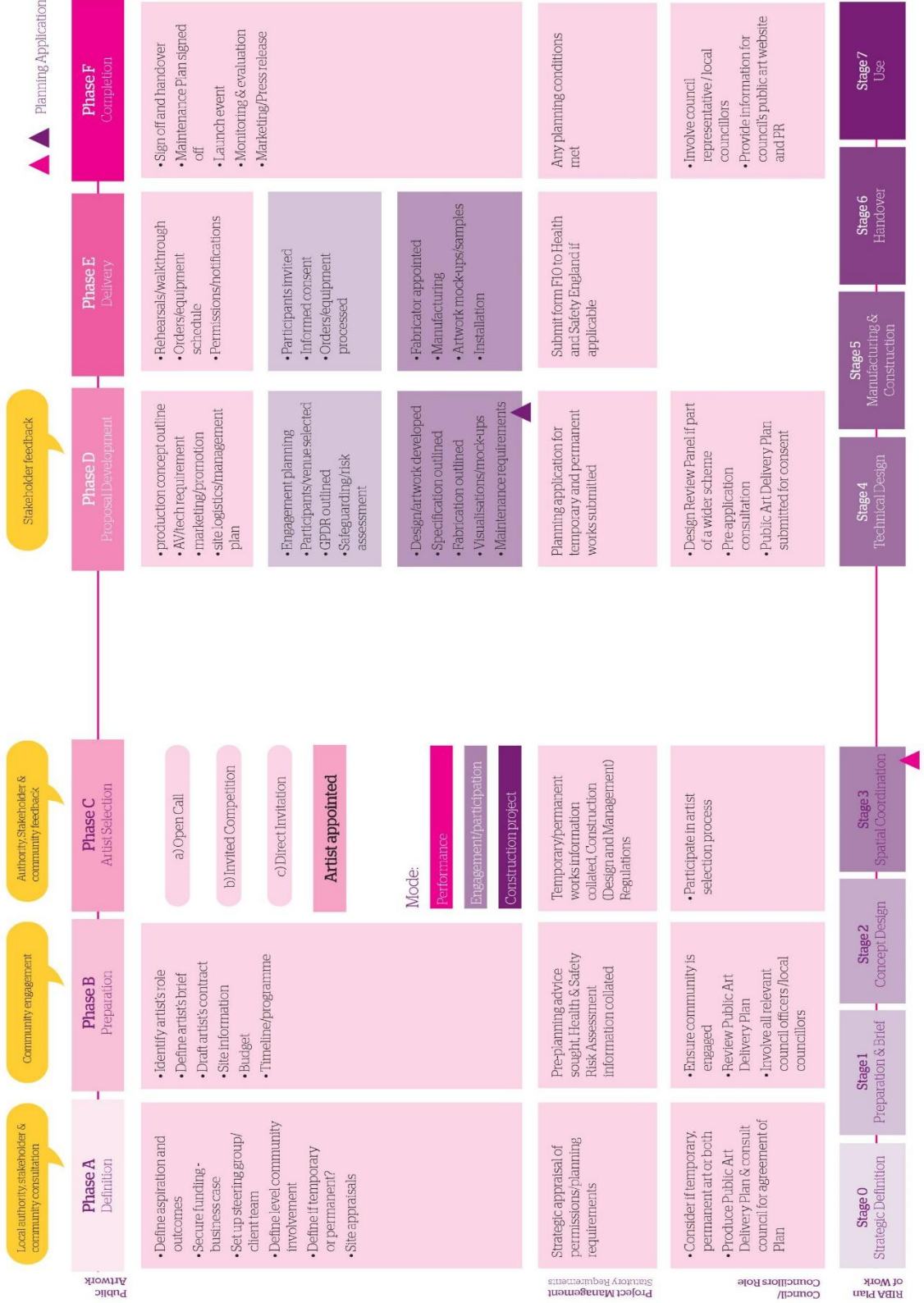
Should you be shortlisted for this role, you would be invited to consider the brief further and to meet with the project team in a virtual Teams meeting.

During this you will be required to present to the Selection Panel, giving a short presentation on your practice and discuss your initial response to the brief. This is not a request for a detailed design, but just your approach.

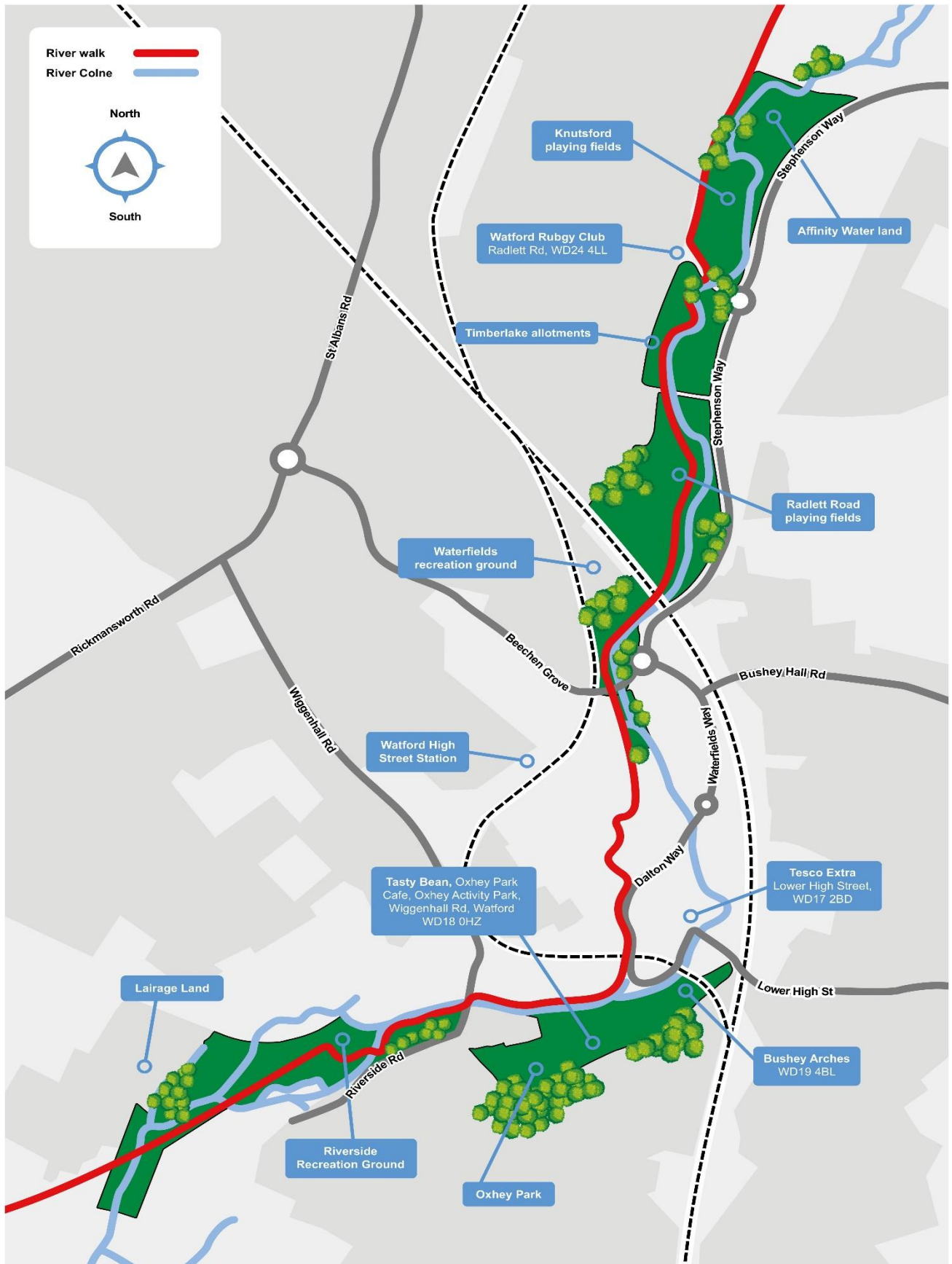
Please do notify us if you have any access needs, we will do our best to accommodate these where possible. The format and agenda for the presentation will be issued to the artist in advance.

A proposal fee will be paid to undertake this work which will include any travel and other associated and reasonable expenses.

Appendices: Appendix. 1 : Public Art Strategy Toolkit



Appendix 2: Rediscovering the River Colne Map & Park Locations





Knutsford Playing Fields:

[Map location.](#)

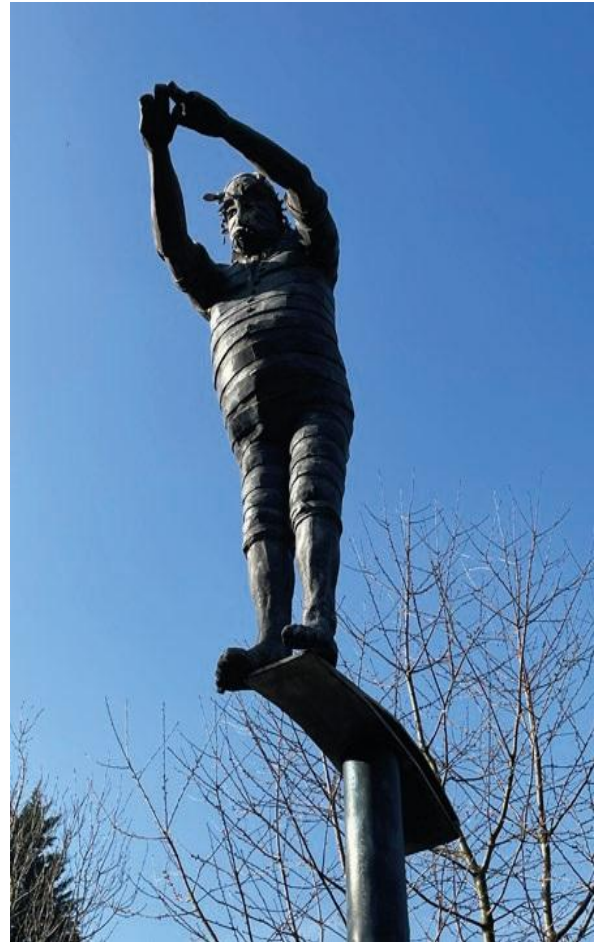
Radlett Road Playing Fields:

[Map location.](#)

Riverside Recreational Ground

[Map location.](#)

River Colne Sculpture Trail, by Luke Perry



School of Fish & Edwardian Diver – Waterfields Recreational Ground



*Heron –
Timberlake
Car Park*



Fisherman – Water Lane



Appendix. 3.:

The Teacher of the Colne

Curiosity leading to renewal
Of place
Belonging and feeling of home
They did not all start their journey here
But now are far from alone
Gathered to find a thread that brings them closer
“This is home” she says
A mother
Most likely another too
They teach me
They say this is a new adventure
Others are unsure
Of why this is something to do
For them
It is a known of
The river
“It hosts a spectrum of colour”
New words are found
To describe a hidden ecosystem that lives
Right around the corner
Hidden away
Living
Breathing
Evolving
Giving

Just like the ones taking it in for the first time
Writing, line by line
Discoveries
Of, Trees
Usually taken as a given
Like pillars on a land that are seen and felt as a thing of beauty
For the first time
We write “I can see..
Leaves, birds, dogs, stinging nettles, grass
Helicopters, children, clouds, parks,
We see, plants, water, insects, skies
The sun, berries, puddles, butterflies
We write “I can hear...
The wind, water, dripping from the green,
Expressions that had been seen
Serene
“Silence”
Cut through by cars
That brought us here
Manoeuvre around the river
The river that has brought us all together

Like streams leading to a creek
To congregate as one
The water always searching for somewhere to go
Like the people who live, and thrive around it
Seeking out others to grow

We grow
We write "I can feel...
Squelch beneath feet
Rocky in places
Smooth in others
Feelings of wonder
Coming away with a little more
Than before
We write "I can smell...
Grass, warmth, mud
Nature

The words struggle to tumble out at first with heavy thought
The lighter the load becomes
The less taught
The freer the write
The possibilities wider
Anything might
We welcome "pixies, fairies, trolls" and imagine more
Guarding the river
Bringing with them
Tales of mystery and what now could be
Away from what is and only reality
Now being shared
By those who even at the start seemed scared
A togetherness
Like the river

Bringing all who are the same
Together
Teaching an outsider of what this place is and could be
"A picturesque view of comfort"
"The sound of trickling water and gushing waves, tickling my brain
an effervescent foam now forming
I now know all the fishes by name."
A new world created
"The river was flowing blue,
With a hint of sparkle"
A magical place anew
"The golden fish glow as they move along the bay"
Transported to
"The river is a bucket of death, pollution and trash
Waves trudge along the cold slimy mud"
"I can see a shadow approaching"
The scene set for a different story
Who knew all these streams, creeks

Of imagination we waiting to be awakened
By the river
That sits in the middle of a place
So often forgotten
But now the face
Of a host of potential stories
From
Feelings

Sights
Smells
Sounds
The teacher, the leader, the idea maker
Being taught
By the very ones who have been subject to lessons
To spark that curiosity
That has led to renewal

Saher Shah, 2024

Poetry Work with Central Primary School:

