



Expression of Interest - Artist's Brief

Seating Bench Commission for the Rest Garden, St Martins St, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

1. Aims and Objectives

Wallingford is a quintessential English market town in South Oxfordshire, steeped in more than a thousand years of history.

Originally established as a Saxon fortified town by King Alfred in the 9th century to defend against Viking attack, Wallingford later became strategically important during the Norman Conquest and was occupied by the army of William the Conqueror in 1066. The town subsequently became the site of one of England's strongest medieval castles.

At the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, Wallingford was one of the largest towns in England, with a population of over 2,000 people. The town played a significant role in medieval England and was one of only four towns referenced in Magna Carta. Coins were minted in Wallingford for over three hundred years, and the castle served as a residence for royal heirs, hosting councils, civil wars and grand ceremonial events. Today, the castle's surviving stone ruins and dramatic earthworks form part of a beautiful public landscape beside the River Thames and remain a popular visitor destination.

Wallingford's rich history continues to shape the character of the town today. The town contains numerous listed buildings, including the iconic 17th-century Town Hall and the 15th/16th-century Flint House, once part of the Priory of the Holy Trinity and now home to the town museum. In the 1930s, Wallingford became associated with Dame Agatha Christie, who lived on the edge of the town and is buried nearby in Cholsey. The town has also gained recognition as a filming location for *Midsomer Murders*.

Located close to the market place is a small public Rest Garden. Wallingford Town Council wishes to enhance this space through the commission of a contemporary seating bench, positioned approximately where indicated by the blue line in Figure 1.

Figure 1.





The bench should:

- reflect and celebrate the heritage and identity of Wallingford;
 - demonstrate creativity and contemporary artistic vision;
 - provide an inviting and functional public seating space;
 - enhance the character and atmosphere of the Garden setting.
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2. Commission Process and Schedule

Wallingford Town Council invites expressions of interest from artists/artisans to design, fabricate and install the bench seating artwork.

The deadline for submissions is **5.00 pm 5th October 2026**.

Shortlisted proposals will be reviewed by representatives of the Wallingford Town Council Working Group. The successful artist will be notified by **26th October 2026**.

The completed work must be installed by **5th April 2027**

The selected artist will work closely with Wallingford Town Council and local stakeholders throughout the development and delivery of the project. The artist will also be expected to support publicity and promotional activities relating to the commission.

The Rest Garden lies within a conservation area and the proposal will require planning approval from both Wallingford Town Council and South Oxfordshire District Council.

3. Budget

A total budget of **£40 - £46k** is available for the commission.

Applicants should provide an indicative budget breakdown as part of their submission, showing how the total commission value will be allocated across the above cost headings. The breakdown should clearly identify the artist's fee and any anticipated costs for design, fabrication, installation, transport, maintenance and VAT (where applicable). Final costs will be agreed with the successful applicant prior to contract award.

This budget is inclusive of:

- artist's/artisan's fees;
- design development and production costs;
- materials and fabrication;
- travel and associated expenses;
- transportation of the completed artwork;



- installation costs;
- health and safety requirements;
- any remedial works required within the first **12 months** following installation where defects arise from the artist's design, materials or workmanship;
- VAT.

4. Site

The Rest Garden measures approximately **15 metres x 5 metres** and is located adjacent to the town centre, immediately visible and accessible from a busy public road. The area in question for the seating bench measures 214cm (7 foot) long by 61cm (2 foot) deep

The purpose of the Garden is to provide residents and visitors with a place to pause, rest and socialise. The existing layout is currently centred around planting beds.

The following existing elements will remain:

- the silver birch tree in the centre planting bed;
- the hedge planting on the left-hand side;
- two existing benches;
- the black square waste bin;
- the Town Council information board.

The garden will also incorporate sustainable planting.

A wheelie bin belonging to the adjacent coffee shop is screened with the hedge planting, and the rear access door to the coffee shop must remain accessible at all times.

Artists are encouraged to consider the wider spatial design of the garden as part of their proposal.

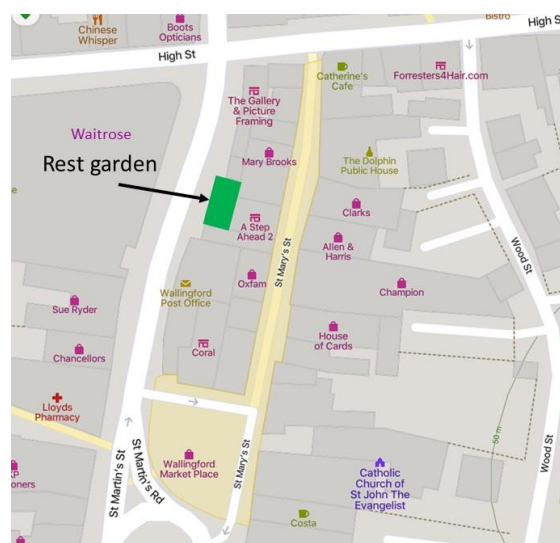


Figure 2. Location map



5. Essential Experience and Skills

Applicants should be able to demonstrate:

- experience delivering public art commissions of a similar scale and permanence;
 - strong conceptual and artistic design ability;
 - understanding of technical fabrication, installation and maintenance requirements;
 - ability to work collaboratively with local authorities, stakeholders and community groups;
 - willingness to engage with publicity, communications and media activity where required;
 - excellent communication and organisational skills.
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6. Maintenance and Durability

The bench should be designed and constructed to remain in good condition for a minimum of **20 years**.

The commissioned artist will be responsible for repairing defects or failures arising from faults in the design, materials, or workmanship of the bench for a period of 12 months following installation. The artist will not be liable for damage or repairs resulting from third-party actions, including vandalism, misuse, accidents, or other external causes.

Following project completion and formal sign-off, Wallingford Town Council will assume responsibility for routine maintenance of the artwork.

The artist will be required to provide:

- a maintenance and care manual;
- guidance on specialist cleaning or conservation requirements;
- a detailed installation and operational risk assessment.

The artist may also be consulted in future regarding maintenance-related matters where specialist advice is required.

7. Copyright and Ownership

Wallingford Town Council will retain ownership of the completed artwork, including all physical materials and associated Intellectual Property rights.

Moral Rights, in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, will remain vested in the artist.



8. Application Requirements

Applicants are required to submit:

- an expression of interest by email outlining:
 - initial ideas and approach to the commission;
 - proposed materials;
 - confirmation of ability to meet the project timetable.
(*Maximum one side of A4*)
- 6–12 high-quality images of relevant previous work, including examples of public commissions of a similar scale where possible;
- a current CV and artist statement.

10. Assessment Criteria

Expressions of Interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

Assessment Criteria	Weighting
Artistic quality, originality and creative response to the brief	30%
Understanding of the site, heritage and context of Wallingford	20%
Technical feasibility, durability and maintenance considerations	20%
Relevant experience and ability to deliver the commission on time and within budget	20%
Quality and clarity of the Expression of Interest and supporting material	10%
Total	100%

Scoring Method

- 1 – Poor: Does not meet the criterion.
 - 2 – Fair: Meets the criterion only in part.
 - 3 – Good: Adequately meets the criterion.
 - 4 – Very Good: Fully meets the criterion with clear strengths.
 - 5 – Excellent: Outstanding response demonstrating exceptional quality and suitability.
- Scores will be weighted according to the percentages above to determine the final ranking.



WALLINGFORD
TOWN COUNCIL

9. Application Deadline

The deadline for applications is **5.00 pm on 5th October 2026**.

Applications and requests for further information should be submitted to:

Wallingford Town Council

Tel: 01491 835373

Email: estatesassistant@wallingfordtowncouncil.gov.uk

Existing views of the site

Winter



Summer

