

Choosing a mural design

Forest Hill Society
September 2024



Background



The Forest Hill Society raised funds from the London Borough of Lewisham NCIL funding programme in 2022.

The intention was to upgrade the community areas of the Forest Hill Station car park by improving the bike parking.

As the rack could not be moved, it was cleaned instead and made more attractive, and we will also be adding a bike repair stand.

However, the area itself remained rather drab and unattractive so we also decided to commission a mural to enhance the wall above the rack and car park, and make the area more of a destination and welcoming space.

We put together a process for getting ideas and selecting a final mural design with community input. We also selected Artmongers and the London School of Muralism, both based in Lewisham, to design and paint the mural.



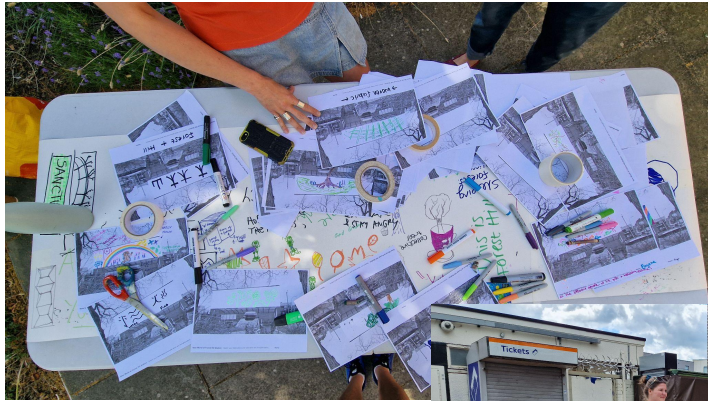


The Process

Process - design workshops



In June 2024 we held a series of workshops at the Station and at the Library where residents and visitors could give suggestions for the content of the design.



Process - design alternatives

Artmongers provided a series of alternative options that were further refined with feedback from the Forest Hill Society Committee.

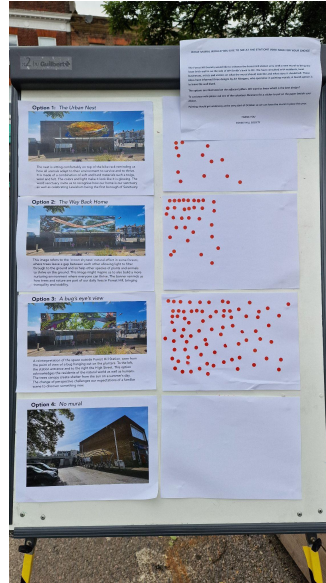
Some early drafts



Process - voting

To make the final selection, we decided to do three things:

1. Create an online form so users could view the options, select their favourite and even leave a comment
2. Put up a physical voting form at the Library, and also take this to the Station, so passers-by could vote
3. Create a final panel to include non Forest Hill Society individuals, with their own stake in Forest Hill, to help us interpret all the feedback and select a winner





The Final Designs

The Final Design Options



Option 1: *The Urban Nest*



The nest is sitting comfortably on top of the bike rack reminding us how all animals adapt to their environment to survive and to thrive. It is made of a combination of soft and hard materials such as twigs, wool and felt. The colors and light make it look like it is glowing. The word sanctuary invites us to recognise how our home is our sanctuary as well as celebrating Lewisham being the first borough of Sanctuary.

The Final Design Options



Option 2: *The Way Back Home*

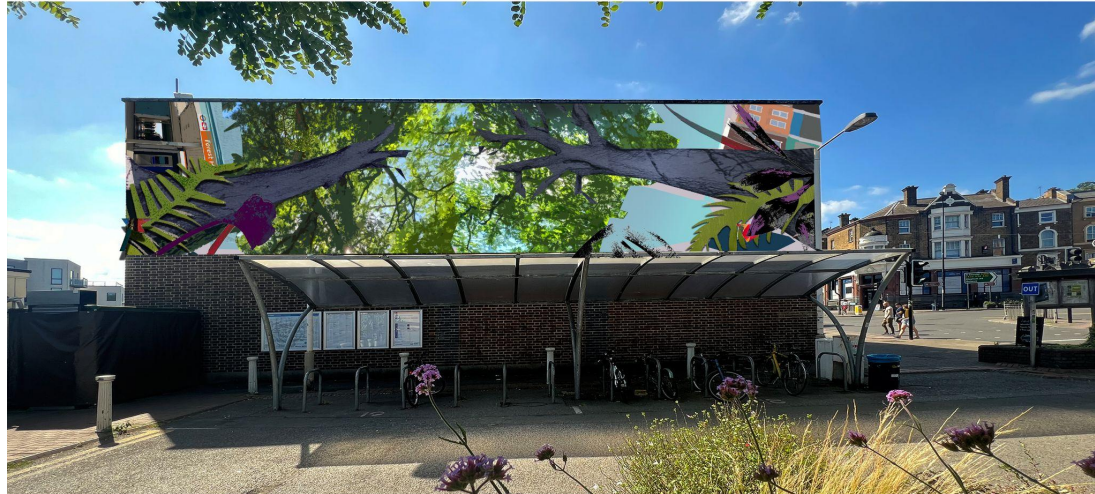


This image refers to the 'crown shyness' natural effect in some forests, where trees leave a gap between each other allowing light to filter through to the ground and so help other species of plants and animals to thrive on the ground. This image might inspire us to also build a more nurturing environment where everyone can thrive. The banner reminds us how trees and nature are part of our daily lives in Forest Hill, bringing tranquility and stability.

The Final Design Options



Option 3: *A bug's eye's view*



A reinterpretation of the space outside Forest Hill Station, seen from the point of view of a bug hanging out on the planters. To the left, the station entrance and to the right the High Street. This option acknowledges the residents of the natural world as well as humans. The trees canopy create shelter from the sun on a summer's day. The change of perspective challenges our expectations of a familiar scene to discover something new.

The Final Design Options



Option 4: *No mural*





The results from the votes

Results - online vote

Having shared the form via email to members and supporters, but also having members share it locally and putting the link on Twitter/X, Instagram and Facebook, we collected a **staggering** number of responses



Forest Hill Station Mural - Voting

1

Option 1: No carbon Mural



Option 2: No river Ecol Mural



Option 3: A boy's eye's view



Option 4: No mural



1

Option 1

Option 2

Option 3

Option 4

Please let us know if you have any questions about your choice

Your name

Option 1	45	5.3%
Option 2	256	30.0%
Option 3	494	57.8%
Option 4	59	6.9%
	854	

Results - online vote feedback



Summary of comments on Option 1 from the online form *

The overall sentiment across the comments is overwhelmingly positive, with many people appreciating the visual appeal, concept, and deeper meaning behind the mural. Several comments emphasize the use of vibrant, warm colours and how they enhance the aesthetic experience, making the mural feel welcoming, comforting, and uplifting. Many people connect emotionally to the idea of the "nest" as a symbol of home and sanctuary, especially in the context of Lewisham being a borough of sanctuary. This concept resonates with both the natural world and human experiences, drawing a connection between the local environment, wildlife, and the diverse communities that have made their homes in the area.

The mural is praised not just for its beauty but also for its thoughtful interaction with the space, particularly how it integrates with the bike shed and brickwork. The idea of creating a sanctuary is celebrated, with some commenters highlighting how the mural speaks to broader themes of refuge, safety, and belonging, especially for migrants, refugees, and the homeless. While there are a few more neutral or critical voices, describing it as "cold" or "better than nothing," the majority of the feedback reflects admiration for the mural's concept, vibrancy, and its ability to evoke a strong emotional connection with viewers.

* Note: This summary was created by Chat-GPT from all the comments received concerning this option

5% support

Results - online vote feedback



Summary of comments on Option 2 from the online form *

The comments convey a strong sense of connection to nature and community, with the mural's theme of trees resonating deeply with those familiar with Forest Hill. Many respondents appreciate the mural for its harmonious design, natural imagery, and uplifting message, which they feel captures the essence of Forest Hill's green spaces and its historical ties to the Great North Wood. The phrase “the way back home is lined with trees” is seen as both poetic and meaningful, evoking a sense of calm, serenity, and belonging. For many, this mural represents the welcoming nature of Forest Hill, offering a comforting reminder of home and the importance of preserving nature in urban spaces.

Visually, the mural's use of trees and natural colours is praised for filling the space well and blending beautifully with the environment. The mural is seen as not only aesthetically pleasing but also inspirational, with several commenters noting that the message of growth, thriving, and community is particularly poignant. The mural's potential to enhance well-being by encouraging viewers to connect with nature is a recurring theme, as is the hope that it will inspire more greening initiatives in the area. Overall, the sentiment is overwhelmingly positive, with the mural seen as both a reflection of Forest Hill's identity and a hopeful symbol for the future.

* Note: This summary was created by Chat-GPT from all the comments received concerning this option

30% support

Results - online vote feedback



Summary of comments on Option 3 from the online form *

The sentiment surrounding this mural design is overwhelmingly positive, with most people praising its vibrant, uplifting, and nature-centric imagery. Many appreciate the way it creatively captures a "bug's eye view" of trees, offering a fresh perspective that encourages passers-by to look up and engage with the space in a new way. This unique viewpoint, along with its bold colours and natural themes, brightens the urban environment and creates a calming, peaceful atmosphere. The mural's connection to the local environment of Forest Hill, known for its greenery, resonates deeply with residents, who feel it reflects the area's identity and enhances the space.

A key feature that people love is the absence of text, which allows for personal interpretation and avoids the distraction of slogans or quotes. The design's simplicity, combined with its powerful representation of trees and nature, is seen as inclusive and universal. Many also appreciate that the mural fills the entire wall, making it immersive and visually striking. Overall, the mural is viewed as a positive addition to the area, bringing beauty, joy, and a sense of calm to an otherwise dull space, while reminding people of the importance of nature in an urban setting. It's a design that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also thought-provoking, offering a deeper connection to the local environment and the community.

* Note: This summary was created by Chat-GPT from all the comments received concerning this option

58% support

Results - online vote feedback



Summary of comments on Option41 from the online form *

The sentiment around the mural proposals is largely negative, with many expressing dissatisfaction with the designs and their suitability for the space. A significant number of people feel that none of the options do justice to the area or enhance its aesthetic appeal. Critics describe the designs as "garish," "unattractive," and even "crass," arguing that they lack relevance to Forest Hill's unique character. Many would prefer to leave the brick wall as is, praising its timeless beauty and simplicity over what they see as busy, overly literal, or generic artwork. There is also concern that murals tend to deteriorate over time or become targets for graffiti, further detracting from the space.

Several commenters believe the funds could be better spent on more practical improvements, such as cleaning, security, or greening the station area. Others suggest that the designs fail to reflect the vibrant local artistic community and feel that more thought should have been given to commissioning local artists or creating art that better represents Forest Hill's history and culture. While some appreciate the idea of a mural in theory, they feel the current options fall short of what the community deserves, calling for a recommissioning process that involves more local input or a fresh, more refined approach to street art that feels relevant and impactful.

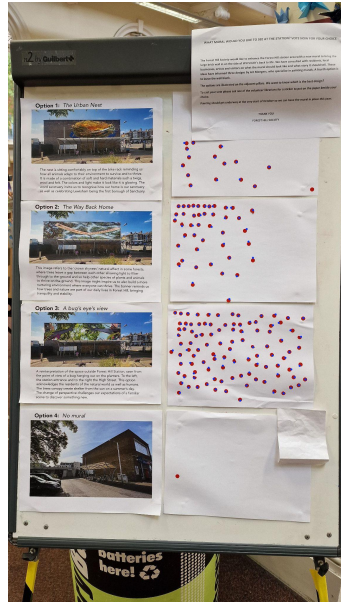
* Note: This summary was created by Chat-GPT from all the comments received concerning this option

7% support

Results - physical vote



The board was on display at the Forest Hill Library for 1 week, and we also gathered feedback in the Station car park on Tuesday, September 24th



Option 1	15	9.4%
Option 2	43	26.9%
Option 3	101	63.1%
Option 4	1	0.6%
	160	

Results - total vote



The combined total votes were as follows:

**With a clear favourite in Option 3,
achieving almost exactly double the votes
for the next favourite**

Option 1	60	5.9%
Option 2	299	29.5%
Option 3	595	58.7%
Option 4	60	5.9%
	1014	



The Final Decision

Decision - Friday, 27th Sept 2024

We put together a local panel with a diverse range of individuals, not all connected to the Society, to help us to select one option for the artist to paint.

While we have gathered a LOT of community feedback, this was just one part of the process designed to provide a preference that we would consider in this final stage. This was not necessarily a decision to be taken solely by popular vote, particularly since we did not know how close the vote might end up being.

We were able to create three distinct potential solutions which all had merit. We asked the panel to get together not just to consider their own preferences, but to take into account the strong feelings from the community, about which should we choose.

The final decision was unanimous, and strongly respected the views and comments of the community.

In the end the community, the committee and the panel all expressed a strong preference for Option 3, "A Bug's Eye View".



Lee Jackson -
designer



Billy Harding -
councillor



Aga Czarnota -
entrepreneur



The choice was ...

A Bug's Eye View

