

Competition Brief

The St. Stephen Hospice in Litoměřice is expanding its services to include a new children's center and is seeking an architectural design that will create a safe, sensitive, and humane environment for children and their loved ones.

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Opening remarks

Dear Architects,

Some buildings provide shelter. Some shape the identity of a place. And some become part of people's stories at their most vulnerable moments. It is such a place that we invite you to create.

We are launching an open architectural competition for the design of the Štěpánka Children's Centre – a place that is not intended to be merely a healthcare facility in the conventional sense. It should become an environment of dignity, closeness, safety and hope for children with life-limiting conditions and their families. A place where architecture is not a backdrop, but a sensitive and active partner in everyday life.

The Štěpánka Children's Centre builds on many years of experience in hospice and palliative care and continues the values, approach and humanity developed over the past 25 years at St. Stephen's Hospice. This makes it all the more important to translate these principles into a setting that responds to the specific needs of children and those close to them.

You are facing an exceptional architectural challenge. You are designing a building that must meet the highest standards of operation and care while creating an environment of warmth, calm and human dignity. An environment that feels like a home rather than an institution. A place where every space, every ray of light, every material and every detail can make a real difference.

The uniqueness of this competition is reinforced by its location. The historic heart of the town is a place of memory, continuity and cultural identity. The new building should not be merely a guest here. It should enter into dialogue with its surroundings – respecting the past while expressing the confidence that comes from its mission.

We are looking for a proposal that considers not only form and function, but above all the people who will use it. A proposal capable of creating an environment that children embrace as a safe world, parents as a source of support, and the town as a value it can be proud of.

We thank everyone who chooses to take part in this challenge. We deeply appreciate your energy, experience and willingness to seek an architectural response to a brief that reaches beyond the usual boundaries of the profession.

We look forward to proposals that combine architectural excellence with a profound understanding of the purpose of this place.

Mgr. Ondřej Česal
director of the organization

Mgr. Monika Marková
project initiator

History of Litoměřice

The town of Litoměřice is one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in North Bohemia, and its urban structure remains a clear record of its long historical development. Its strategic location at the confluence of the Elbe and Ohře rivers established it as an important centre of trade and administration from the early Middle Ages. From the 13th century onwards, the town was systematically shaped as a royal town with a regular street grid and a central square, a layout that remains clearly legible today..

A particularly significant and historically valuable part of Litoměřice is Cathedral Hill (Dómský vrch). Closely connected to the town centre, it nevertheless follows its own, older historical trajectory. The site is considered one of the oldest parts of the present-day town, with origins reaching back to the pre-urban period, when an early medieval fortified settlement stood here. Cathedral Hill has therefore retained its character as a historic spiritual and administrative centre that predates the foundation of the royal town itself..

The dominant landmark of the area is St. Stephen's Cathedral, whose current Baroque form reflects successive rebuilding of earlier ecclesiastical structures. Together with the Bishopric and other church institutions, the cathedral has long shaped the character of the site as the spiritual centre of the region. The wider area around Cathedral Hill contains a remarkable concentration of churches, chapels and monastic buildings, collectively forming a distinctive layer of the town's historic landscape. This density of religious architecture reflects Litoměřice's long-standing role as the ecclesiastical centre of North Bohemia.

In urban terms, Cathedral Hill differs markedly from the regular structure of the historic town centre. While the town is based on a geometric layout, this area retains a looser and more organic pattern shaped by topography and the gradual layering of development. Its elevated position also gives the religious buildings a prominent presence in the town skyline, reinforcing their symbolic significance.

Today, the entire historic centre of Litoměřice, including Cathedral Hill, is protected as an urban conservation area. This designation reflects its exceptional value not only as a collection of historic buildings but, above all, as a coherent urban ensemble. The area is distinguished by its high degree of authenticity, the readability of its historical layers, and the sensitive scale of its built environment.



St. Stephen's Hospice

The building that today houses St. Stephen's Hospice originally belonged to Canon Vinzenz Luksch, who commissioned the villa as a home for the diocesan museum. An art historian, collector and heritage conservationist, Luksch assembled his collections of paintings, sculptures, musical instruments and archaeological artefacts here. Following his death, the property passed to his family, but after the Second World War it was expropriated under the Beneš Decrees. In April 1946, the building was converted into a maternity hospital, which remained in operation until 1994. During this period, the villa was extended with an addition that is still clearly distinguishable through its contrasting architectural character. In 1997, during his visit to Prague, Pope John Paul II blessed the foundation stone of the future hospice. Two years later, construction began on an extension to the building on the adjacent site. The hospice opened in February 2001.

Preparations are currently underway for a further extension on the northern side of the building, facing the neighbouring senior care home complex. The proposed addition will accommodate parking at ground level and expanded operational facilities on the upper floors.

In 2025, St. Stephen's Hospice and the City of Litoměřice signed a memorandum of cooperation to support the development of paediatric palliative care services. To enable the project, the property at Rybářské Square 386/3 was acquired and is intended to be replaced by a new building for the children's centre. The project is funded by the Hospice with support from the Vlček Family Foundation.



the south facade of the St. Stephen Hospice building



view across the small park in front of the hospice toward the site of the future children's centre



memorial space



Cathedral Hill – view from the small park south of the hospice

Project Site

The project site is located on Cathedral Hill, within a setting of exceptional historical depth that embodies the spiritual, cultural and urban identity of the city. The surrounding area is dominated by the Baroque Cathedral of St. Stephen and the Bishop's Residence, one of Litoměřice's key visitor destinations. A revitalisation of the Bishop's Garden is currently being prepared, opening the grounds to the public. The project will also include the refurbishment of the cathedral interior and a new lighting scheme for the precinct.

A promenade encircles Cathedral Hill and passes alongside the hospice, offering views of the surrounding landscape and serving as a popular walking route for residents, hospice patients and residents of the neighbouring senior care home. Along the route stands a gazebo used for rest and informal gatherings. A memorial space is located within the green area south of the hospice. The entire area is publicly accessible without restrictions. The surroundings of the hospice and Rybářské Square also regularly host community events, including the Run for the Hospice charity event.



Development Plot

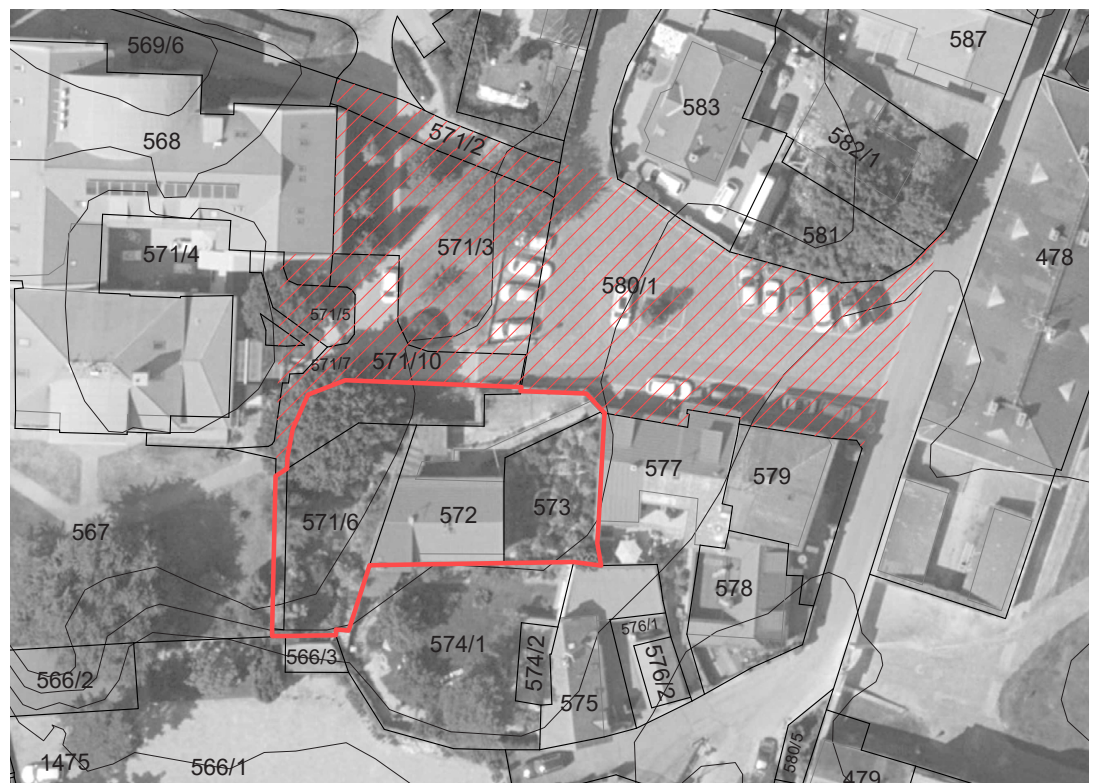
The site for the new hospice is located on plots 571/6, 572 and 573, owned by St. Stephen's Hospice, and on part of plot 571/3, which is to be acquired from the City for the construction of the new children's centre (the transfer process is currently underway). The total site area is 667 m². The site is currently occupied by a vacant residential building. Demolition documentation has already been completed, with demolition anticipated in November 2026. Given its location within the oldest part of Litoměřice, archaeological investigations will form part of the project preparation.

According to the Litoměřice Land Use Plan, the site falls within zone SC.1 – Mixed-Use Town Centre I (with limited vehicular access). It also lies within the Urban Conservation Area. The proposal should therefore respond sensitively to the surrounding context, respecting its scale, massing and spatial structure while appropriately complementing the existing urban fabric. The Land Use Plan defines the spatial requirements for this area as follows: *New buildings or extensions shall, through their architectural articulation and overall massing (particularly roof form, cornice height and ridge height), respect the compositional relationships, scale, context of the surrounding development and the character of the Urban Conservation Area. The roovescape shall retain a coherent character in long-range views. Green areas are defined by the historic urban structure or, where applicable, by the regulatory plan. Ground-level amenities: linear and area planting, street furniture for relaxation. The green space coefficient (KZ) will be determined individually for each site.*

Wider Project Area

The competition proposal shall also include a conceptual design for Rybářské Square as the forecourt of the hospice and an important public and transport space. As the affected plots are owned by the City, this part is expected to be developed at concept level only.

-  development plot:
lot for the construction
of the children's center
-  wider project area:
Rybářské square



Brief

The competition seeks a design for a new children's hospice that will expand the services of St. Stephen's Hospice through the provision of paediatric respite care within the field of palliative medicine. The project will also relocate the palliative medicine outpatient clinic and psychotherapy counselling service into the new building, creating an integrated facility providing comprehensive support for children and their families.

A children's hospice is a highly sensitive type of healthcare facility. Its purpose extends beyond care in the traditional medical sense to creating an environment that reflects everyday life as closely as possible and allows life's final stages to be experienced with dignity, calm and humanity. It is a place where care, closeness and daily life meet moments of profound personal significance. Paediatric palliative care views the child not in isolation but always within the context of family and loved ones, who form the natural centre of support and shared experience. The hospice will therefore provide not only care for seriously ill children but comprehensive support for the entire family throughout the course of illness..

The design should carefully balance the need for privacy with opportunities for togetherness, allowing both moments of solitude and moments of closeness and sharing. Different spaces may offer varying degrees of intimacy, openness and connection to their surroundings. This subtle range of spatial conditions can help children and their families find their own rhythm and way of inhabiting the building. Legibility, human scale, a sense of safety and the ability to identify with the environment are of particular importance.

The quality of the proposal will depend not only on its layout but on its overall sensory experience. The children's centre should support wellbeing through the thoughtful use of daylight, access to outdoor spaces, natural and tactile materials, and careful consideration of acoustics, colour and texture. Both a sterile hospital atmosphere and distracting elements should be avoided. The architecture should create a calm and welcoming environment that supports children and their families in finding their own daily rhythm. Visual and physical connections to the outdoors play an important role, enabling direct transitions between inside and outside, views of the surrounding landscape and contact with nature throughout the seasons.

Play and creativity are equally important. Childhood does not disappear in these circumstances; on the contrary, it remains essential. Playful and interactive elements may become a natural part of both indoor and outdoor spaces, integrated into the architecture, interior design or detail. In this way, the building can gently encourage curiosity, joy and imagination.

Respect for the immediate surroundings is another key consideration. The site is located in close proximity to residential buildings, and issues such as operational noise, lighting and visual impact must therefore be addressed with care (including night-time illumination, noise from open windows, staff call systems, etc.). The proposal should minimise disruption to neighbours and integrate naturally into the existing urban structure.

The building should be designed in accordance with principles of energy-efficient and environmentally responsible construction, with the aim of achieving a low-energy or passive building standard. Emphasis should be placed on a high-performance building envelope, efficient building systems and long-term sustainability. The proposal should incorporate renewable energy sources, particularly photovoltaic panels, with sufficient capacity and technical provision to support not only the new building but also future energy integration with St. Stephen's Hospice. The design should seek to minimise operating costs and use natural resources responsibly while providing a healthy, comfortable and stable indoor environment for patients, families and staff.

The result should be a building that feels not like an institution but like a place of safety, calm and dignity, capable of supporting the life that unfolds within it.

Connection to the Existing Hospice Building

For operational reasons, the new building must be connected to the existing St. Stephen's Hospice by a covered circulation route with a smooth surface. The intention is to make maximum use of the hospice's existing infrastructure for the operation of the Štěpánka Children's Centre. This applies in particular to catering facilities, whose capacity is sufficient within the existing kitchen, as well as waste management facilities, where current storage areas can accommodate the expected increase in demand. The laundry and mortuary will also serve both buildings. Conversely, the new building will provide facilities shared with the existing hospice operation, such as accommodation for volunteers. A well-designed connection between the two buildings is therefore essential for the smooth and efficient operation of the entire site, enabling the movement of staff and the transport of supplies, meals, waste, laundry and deceased patients. The form of the connection is left to the competitors. However, circulation routes should avoid operational conflicts and provide a covered, accessible passage protected from weather conditions and suitable for wheeled transport. Pedestrian access between the existing and proposed buildings and the garden south of the hospice must be maintained. The garden is owned by the City and is regularly used by both patients and the public.

Rybářské Square

In relation to the new children's centre and its integration into the historic urban context, careful consideration should also be given to the future form and function of Rybářské Square. The proposal should address, in particular, the arrangement of parking spaces, roadways, pedestrian routes and green areas, with the aim of improving clarity, safety and the overall quality of the public realm. The design should also respond to the specific operational requirements of the hospice, particularly by ensuring unobstructed ambulance access. The new building will provide a covered area for patient admission and bed transfer. Existing green areas should not be reduced; however, competitors may reconsider their current arrangement and propose solutions that enhance both the recreational and landscape qualities of the square. Existing mature trees should be retained and integrated wherever possible, while any new planting should sensitively complement the composition of the public space and contribute to its microclimatic and visual quality. The existing number of parking spaces must be maintained and may be increased if appropriate. The proposal should preserve the functionality of access roads, service routes and entrances to neighbouring properties.

Parking

Given the limited size of the site and the scope of the required building programme, neither underground parking nor the provision of the full parking capacity within the project area is expected. The contracting authority is currently negotiating the provision of long-term parking capacity off-site, within walking distance of the building. Discussions are primarily being held with the management of Kalich Arena and the Diocese of Litoměřice. Competition proposals may therefore assume that the majority of the required parking capacity will be provided externally. Within the project area, only the necessary number of parking spaces and areas for short-term parking, servicing and operational needs are expected.

Building Height

Given the scope of the required building programme, competitors are encouraged to utilise the maximum recommended building height established by the City Architect, namely three above-ground storeys. The uppermost storey should be designed as a recessed level. The corner building on plot no. 579 should be considered the reference height, which the new building should not exceed. The aim is to find a balanced solution that accommodates the operational requirements while integrating sensitively into the surrounding urban fabric.

Landscape and Planting

The proposal should respect the existing mature vegetation and seek to retain it wherever possible. The contracting authority acknowledges that the mature tree located between the existing hospice building and the plot designated for the children's centre occupies an area that may be important for future operational links between the two buildings. Nevertheless, its precautionary removal is not recommended at this stage. Should the retention of the tree significantly limit the quality of the proposed architectural, operational or functional solution, its removal may be considered. Any such intervention must, however, be clearly and convincingly justified within the proposal.

Archaeology

The project area is located within a site of significant historical and archaeological potential. Previous archaeological investigations indicate that St. George's Church may once have stood on Cathedral Hill, although its exact location has not yet been confirmed. It therefore cannot be ruled out that archaeological investigations undertaken as part of the project may uncover its remains or other archaeologically significant finds.

Geological Conditions

The site is underlain predominantly by loess deposits. The contracting authority notes that these ground conditions place increased demands on the structural and foundation design of the building. Competitors should take this into account and assume an appropriate foundation strategy. Detailed geotechnical conditions will be addressed in subsequent design stages.

Anticipated Opening Date

The new service is scheduled to commence operation at the beginning of 2030.

Building programme

(the square meters listed are only recommendations)

Accommodation-Based Respite Care Service for Paediatric Patients

Beds

Patient Rooms

The hospice will provide 6 single rooms for children and young adults. The rooms will serve both rehabilitation stays and short-term respite stays. Each room shall include an en-suite bathroom and a sofa bed or extra bed for an accompanying family member. Direct access from every room to an outdoor space, whether private or shared, is desirable. Adequate manoeuvring space and door widths (including access to outdoor areas) must allow for the movement of beds. Oxygen supply shall be provided to each bed.

6 × Single Patient Room – 32 m²

Family Apartment

The children's centre will also provide accommodation for the whole family as part of an educational stay programme. The family apartment should support the most natural pattern of everyday family life possible. The aim of the stay is to prepare the family for home-based care, familiarise them with the child's changing condition and care needs, and provide psychological and social support. The apartment should help families gradually gain the confidence and skills needed for subsequent care at home..

Family Apartment – preferably a 3-room apartment with kitchenette

Facilities for Nurses and Allied Health Professionals (AHPs)

Staff facilities shall include a nurses' station serving as a workspace during shifts, a staff room for breaks and meals, changing rooms and sanitary facilities. Staffing is assumed to be four employees during the day shift and two employees during the night shift.

The nurses' station should allow direct supervision of patients and should therefore ideally be located on the same floor as the patient rooms. At the same time, it should be possible to provide a degree of visual and acoustic separation. Staff changing rooms do not need to be located on the same floor. A changing room for 20 women and 5 men is required. Due to the lack of space in the existing hospice building, a changing room for volunteers is also required.

Nurses' Station – 20 m²

Staff Room – cca 20 m²

Women's Changing Room – capacity 20 persons

Men's Changing Room – capacity 5 persons

Volunteer Changing Room

Sanitary Facilities

Children's Centre Support Spaces

The building should include spaces supporting the day-to-day operation of the hospice, family facilities, and therapeutic and social activities. The design should seek to maximise synergies between individual functions and uses..

Meals will be prepared in the existing kitchen of St. Stephen's Hospice and delivered to the children's centre via the connecting corridor. Within the new building, only facilities for reheating and simple food preparation are required in the form of a kitchenette. Meals may be served in patient rooms; however, it is also desirable to provide a shared living space that supports communal dining and informal interaction between families. This should not take the form of a separate dining room, but rather a multifunctional space naturally integrated into the life of the building. An area for parents and family members is also required, providing a place for rest, meals and temporary respite from demanding situations. It should include a small kitchenette for preparing simple food and drinks, as well as seating.

Kitchenette – min. 12 m²
Shared Dining and Living Space
Parents' Lounge

A dedicated room serving as both a children's playroom and a teaching space is also required. The space should accommodate different forms of play, creative activities and individual education according to the children's current needs.

Children's Playroom / Classroom – 45 m²

The programme should also include a snoezelen room for sensory therapy and relaxation. The space should support sensory stimulation, a sense of safety and opportunities for individual relaxation. It should be located in a quieter part of the building, away from operational noise, while remaining easily accessible to external visitors. The room should be large enough to allow safe movement, including wheelchair users, and provide opportunities for relaxation both seated and lying down, for example on beanbags or positioning cushions. Sensory features such as lighting effects, vibration elements, speakers or a swing may be included. Adjustable lighting, including full blackout, a soft floor surface and a comfortable indoor environment suitable for longer stays are important requirements. Certain sensory elements may also be naturally integrated into other parts of the building..

Snoezelen Room – 20 m²

Spaces for farewell and spiritual support are also an important part of the brief. The building should include a chapel or quiet room intended for reflection, prayer or solitude, without affiliation to any particular faith. This should be complemented by a farewell room providing a dignified and peaceful setting for families to say goodbye to a child.

Chapel / Quiet Room – 20 m²
Farewell Room – 18 m²

The programme should also include two small offices for consultations and administrative work. Each office should contain one workstation and a small area for informal meetings or consultations.

2 × Office – 12 m² each

Storage and Technical Facilities

Appropriate storage and technical facilities are required to support the day-to-day operation of the children's centre. These should include storage for medicines and medical supplies, clean linen, medical equipment and aids, as well as a utility room and a soiled utility room. For operational reasons, both utility rooms should ideally be located on the same floor as the patient rooms. Both rooms should be equipped with a sink and slop hopper. The utility room will be used for waste storage, while the soiled utility room will accommodate hazardous waste and used laundry.

Storage for Medicines and Medical Supplies

Storage for Clean Linen, Equipment and Medical Aids

Utility Room – Waste Storage

Soiled Utility Room – Hazardous Waste and Used Laundry

Outdoor Space

The outdoor environment is an integral part of the proposal. Terraces, gardens and small sheltered outdoor areas can provide contact with nature, weather and the changing seasons, while also offering places for gathering and everyday outdoor use. The aim is for outdoor space to be directly accessible from every patient room and from shared spaces such as the children's playroom.

Outpatient Services

The outpatient department will comprise a psychotherapy counselling service, a palliative medicine clinic and physiotherapy facilities. These functions should form a single operational unit with shared visitor facilities, particularly a waiting area and public sanitary facilities. The outpatient department should be directly accessible from the street, either at ground level or on upper floors, provided that step-free access is ensured by a lift and visitor wayfinding is clear and intuitive.

The services will be open to the public and will accommodate both adult and paediatric clients. Operational arrangements will be managed through the scheduling of consultation days and opening hours.

Staff facilities for the outpatient department will be shared with those of the respite care service and should therefore have an operational connection. At the same time, a clear separation between the two functions must be maintained. While the outpatient department will serve the general public and generate regular visitor traffic, the residential care area must remain a protected and private environment. Visitor circulation routes should therefore be designed with regard to the protected character of the residential part of the building.

The psychotherapy counselling service will include two consultation rooms and a multipurpose consultation room for psychosocial support, education and group activities. Both the palliative medicine clinic and physiotherapy service will require one consultation room each. Physiotherapy should additionally include a dedicated room for equipment-based rehabilitation.

Entrance Area / Waiting Room
2 × Psychotherapy Consultation Room – 20 m²
Psychosocial Support Consultation Room – 30 m²
Palliative Medicine Clinic – 20 m²
Physiotherapy Consultation Room – 20 m²
Rehabilitation Room – 20 m²
Public WC

Technical Facilities

The proposal should include appropriate technical facilities and spaces required for building services. Given the limited capacity of the existing hospice building, competitors are also asked to provide suitable storage for gardening equipment and related maintenance tools used to manage the outdoor areas.

Waste storage will continue to be accommodated within the existing St. Stephen's Hospice building, where sufficient capacity already exists to serve both the current and proposed operations.

Technical rooms
Garden Equipment Storage



