

ART AND DESIGN IN THE PUBLIC REALM – PLANNING ADVICE NOTE



Picture by Scott Farlow ¹

Introduction

This advice note and policy statement aims to promote new partners and new models for public art as part of cultural strategies, local development partnerships and collaborative planning.

It aims to promote clear procurement and implementation procedures for public art planning and the commissioning of a high quality creative arts programme in South Gloucestershire. All arts projects including public art should meet our key criteria of quality, access and sustainability.

Why Public Art?

Local development frameworks aim to promote greater community engagement with the planning process *to seek direct participation from local people in shaping the future of their communities.* 'Delivering a Fundamental Change' Planning Green Paper (date)

Artists can also work very effectively with local people and groups. They can enhance a 'sense of place' by helping people to articulate, in many different ways, the perception and experience of their environment.

Arts Council England

Public Art is an integral component of achieving high quality design within the built environment and public spaces, promoted: *with those individuals, organisations and partnerships that make policy work on the ground – the police, street cleaners, neighbourhood and street wardens, community leaders, businesses, **artists**, contractors and local government.*

'Living Places, Cleaner, Safer, Greener' Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Council seeks to contribute to quality of life through good design and the creation of sustainable communities in accordance with PPS1 and PPS3. These advocate high quality public realm and the creation or enhancement of a distinctive character that relates well to the surroundings and supports a sense of local pride and civic identity.

Public Art is recognised as important to:

- developing the cultural identity of South Gloucestershire.
- creating distinction and character in the built environment.
- engaging with local communities and enabling an increased sense of ownership.

For developers, public art can enrich and support high quality design, develop identity and uniqueness for new developments and offer marketing opportunities.

¹ Picture - Design Proposals for Fountain Square Staple Hill by Scott Farlow

The Percent for Art Policy

At its inception in 1996, South Gloucestershire Council adopted the Percent for Art Scheme, a widespread and well established policy promoted by Arts Council England to integrate the work of artists into the planned development of public space. This is enshrined in the adopted Local Plan in policy LC13 which encourages developers to allocate 1% of the capital costs of a development to commissioning art and design as an integral part of scheme.

In most cases, the Developer will manage the public art commission in agreement with the Council. However, for developments where there may be limited scope or access to the public art, the Council may ask for the contribution to be applied to identified arts projects which will benefit the local community.

Delivery of public art through the planning process

The Council will seek a percent for art contribution to public art in the following circumstances:

- residential developments of over 30 units or of significant historical or locational interest.
- Retail, commercial and mixed developments over 2,000 sq. metres.
- significant public buildings or community facilities.

Sites identified for development through the local development scheme (Core Strategy) will have significant potential for the public realm and the Council will encourage such sites to demonstrate the highest standards of design.

Options for Art

Public Art need not be too formal, monumental or object-based.

It can be permanent or temporary.

It can extend the fine arts of drawing, painting and sculpture into new formats and new locations.

It can incorporate text, craft, applied art and design, photography, print, moving image, computer generated images, projection, live art, installation and performance, light, sound and music.

It can be integral to landscape design. It can make places more legible and accessible. It can offer opportunities for play.

It may refer to our heritage or celebrate the future, highlight specific areas and issues or be conceptual.

In whatever form, public art has one consistent quality: it is site-specific and relates to the context or use of a particular site or location within the public realm.



² Picture – Design proposals for Bradley Stoke Town Square by Walter Jack Studios

Integration in to the Design process

In all schemes public art should be considered carefully at the earliest stages to ensure a fully integrated scheme and, therefore, the Council will seek information at outline and detailed application stages.

Inclusion at the earliest stages enables all opportunities to be assessed and other areas to be influenced.

Public art budgets can be used to enhance other capital elements within a scheme such as landscape design, street furniture, paving, ³lighting or architectural features to provide high quality, creative design.



Working with artists offers an opportunity to design schemes which go beyond the purely functional and create places that reflect the life, identity and aspirations of a particular place or community.

Public Art is complementary to good urban and building design, as part of social investment in new housing, the design and use of community and public spaces. It should consider how the public will use and interact with the site, making it more accessible and legible.

Commisioning and managing a public art scheme

The Council recommends the appointment of a professional, recommended public art consultant working with members of the design team to develop and manage the commissioned programme.

The level of assistance required will depend on the nature of the application. However, for larger developments, especially sites which are to be delivered in phases and/or with mixed uses, the Council would anticipate a clear public art strategy for the whole site.

The Council's Arts Development Service can advise developers on the appointment of a suitable professional.

Community Involvement

The Council encourages community involvement in the development of public art programmes to encourage a sense of ownership of the scheme. Again the nature of of such involvement will vary from site to site, commission to commission.

It need not be formal consultation but should seek to uncover the local community's relationship to the site and its significance. Ideally, it should be a dialogue that informs the development of the commission and informs the local community about it.

³ Picture Tri Flight - Gateway feature to North Bristol Park by Diane Gorvin and Philip Bews

Working principles

Whilst each development will have its individual considerations, the Council would encourage developers to adopt the following points and principles for art and design schemes in the public realm:

- Work should be specially commissioned for each site to reflect its significance and use.
- A clear plan should be developed and artists commissioned at the earliest stages so that the work can contribute to the overall design and be fully integrated in it.
- The commissioner should draw on the expertise of a recognised public art professional to develop and manage the scheme to ensure high quality outcomes.
- As a minimum, each scheme should develop an artist's brief detailing the nature of the site, the aims of the commission, budget, timescale, selection process and project management.
- The artist's brief should not be prescriptive and should enable the artist to bring their own creative response to the site.
- Commissioners should include stakeholders in the selection process.
- Commissioners should encourage community involvement in public art and design schemes.
- Commissioners should agree clear contracts with artists.
- Commissioners should consider sustainability issues and ensure commissioned artwork is fit for purpose and robust.
- Commissioners should consider health and safety, maintenance arrangements and costs as well as guidelines for decommissioning when commissioning a scheme.
- Where a commission involves public open space to be adopted by the Council, commissioners should also consult the Community Spaces Team.

Design and Development Process

It will help if developers provide a statement of approach to public art within the appropriate Design and Access Statement.

As a minimum, this should cover:

- Strategic Approach.
- Proposed implementation plan including phasing.
- Arrangements for commissioning and project management.
- Budget allocation.
- Maintenance and Health & Safety.

Where appropriate proposals may need to be confirmed in a Section 106 agreement.

For further information, please call the Arts Development Officer on 01454 865835.

Further information on public art can be found at www.publicartonline.org.uk or www.ixia-info.com.