

# Art and design in the public realm – Advice Note

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## Introduction

South Gloucestershire has long been recognised as ‘a great place to live and work’. The Council Plan 2020-24 sets out how the Council will seek to deliver this vision for the area.

This document in turn sets out how public art can deliver the priorities of our Council plan, describes what we mean by public art, the role public art plays in place-making and social value and the mechanisms for public art agreements and delivery.

All developers and inward investment will be required to demonstrate how they will support this and commit to the ongoing process in their planning applications.

## How public art supports council priorities and principles for developing schemes

Our expectations for public art are based on key priorities in our Council plan:

- ***We will promote clean, affordable, high quality design of new and existing communities.*** Placemaking and quality urban design: Public art contributes to unique, vibrant places to live, work and visit. Embedding public art and culture into schemes as early as possible can maximise economic and social value for developers, residents and users
- ***We will enable communities to work together to help improve their lives and address the problems that are important to them.*** Social engagement: public art can creatively engage our communities with the development process and deliver outcomes that promote social value and wellbeing.
- ***We will lead the response to the climate emergency and deliver on our commitments.*** Sustainability: In developing public art, we will seek programmes of work that contribute to environmental and social sustainability.
- ***We will enable people and business to recover and thrive within cohesive communities that value diversity.*** Cultural investment: Public art can support the cultural sector by commissioning artists and producers and providing space to allow their vision and ideas to thrive. This priority is also echoed in the Cultural Strategy for the West of England which identifies culture as a key driver for economic and social wellbeing.

## What do we mean by public art?

The term 'Public Art' refers to art that is in the public realm, regardless of whether it is situated on public or private property or whether it has been paid for with public or private money.

When we think about 'Public Art' we often imagine static, permanent sculptures in parks, roundabouts or public squares.

South Gloucestershire Council along with other local councils takes a much broader approach to thinking about what public art can be, and can also achieve, and defines 'Public Art' as 'a diversity of creative practice and cultural experience that takes place in the public realm'.

This might include:

- Commissioning temporary or permanent artworks.
- Creative commissioning to support functional requirements such as lighting, wayfinding, colour schemes, landscaping and green space to incorporate bespoke artistic features in their development
- Providing space, assets or infrastructure to enable ongoing cultural and community activity and experiences such as artist studios, access to nature, community resources
- Commissioning cultural 'happenings' and public realm animation e.g. performance, street art, creative interventions and installations
- Socially engaged work that supports community development or skills acquisition.

Most importantly, public art and the creative process around this, can and should be a mechanism at the earliest stage of developments for engaging with stakeholders, exploring and communicating around complex issues, and enabling local people to contribute to vision and place.

The type of collaboration and outputs of a programme will depend on the nature of the development and the particular needs of the site or locality.

Whatever its form, public art should be unique and inspiring: it should be site-specific, relating to the context, use or location of that site and its relationship to existing and new communities.

## Public art and social value

As an overarching aim in its four year plan, the Council is committed to closing the inequality gap. We see public art as having a particularly powerful role in democratising culture to support communities' economic and social wellbeing. We believe that investing money and time in people (artists, producers and communities) creates a legacy of local empowerment, ownership and identity.

In support of addressing the climate emergency, we are also very keen to support and enable imaginative and ambitious public art commissioning that connects to wider social value objectives around building ecological resilience and learning and skills.

The Council requires community engagement in the development of public art programmes to support these two overarching aims of the Council plan. Community and stakeholder engagement should seek to uncover the local community's relationship to the site, their needs and aspirations. The nature of such involvement will vary from site to site, programme to programme, commission to commission.

## Public Art in the Design and Planning process

*'Places affect us all – they are where we live, work and spend our leisure time. Well-designed places influence the quality of our experience as we spend time in them and move around them. We enjoy them, as occupants or users but also as passers-by and visitors. They can lift our spirits by making us feel at home, giving us a buzz of excitement or creating a sense of delight. They have been shown to affect our health and well-being, our feelings of safety, security, inclusion and belonging, and our sense of community cohesion.'* National Design Guide (updated Jan 2021)

In line with national, regional and local planning policy, the Council will seek to agree a relevant public art programme for each site based on the particular characteristics of the site. The Council will seek to formalise public art proposals through planning conditions or s106 agreements.

The Council will assess each site on its situation and significance; however, as a guideline we will seek to ensure that public art is addressed in:

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

Sites identified for development through the Local Plan will have significant potential for the public realm and the Council will encourage such sites to demonstrate the highest standards of design.

New construction and major regeneration projects should include public art commissioning in the amount of up to one percent of the total budget. The one percent can be a full cash contribution to deliver a public art scheme which meets council key principles and individual scheme requirements and aspirations. More frequently it can be made up of a cash contribution (minimum 0.25%) matched with existing budget where an arts / creative approach can add value. For example, scheme budgets for public realm, landscaping, decorative schemes / surfaces, play etc. or unlocking creative space through former-use assets. Consideration of public art at the earliest stages enables all these opportunities to be assessed, other areas to be influenced and public art to be considered as part of the wider budget.

We aim for an engaged approach between the council and developer/s to enable a public art solution that is both achievable and value-adding for both the scheme and the area rather than an unnecessary and expensive 'add on'.

## Process for agreeing public art

### Stage 1 Public Art Plan

The Council requires a broad Cultural Engagement / Public Art Plan prior to commencement on site. As outlined above, we require such a plan at the earliest opportunity to ensure that public art is fully integrated into the proposed scheme and all options can be considered to maximise the impact of the public art in the scheme.

The size and scope of the plan required will reflect the size and complexity of the development. For major sites, a cohesive, costed plan will enable single and multiple developers to plan an approach that most importantly meets the needs and opportunities of their specific scheme.

The plan should present a toolkit and timeline to support subsequent commission delivery. Public art plans presented as part of planning applications could include but not be limited to:

- Strategic Approach outlining the rationale behind why the developers are proposing a particular scheme – how it relates to the site and its uses and supports the council's priorities and principles.
- Community engagement and skills development opportunities.
- Proposed implementation plan including phasing.
- Budget allocation.
- Arrangements for commissioning including a long list of artists as appropriate
- Arrangements for project management.
- Artists brief/s
- Maintenance and Health & Safety.

### Stage 2 Public Art Delivery

Delivery of public art proposed in the Cultural Engagement /Public Art Plan will then be carried out in full accordance with this and according to the timeline provided in the plan. We will require outline and detailed designs to be submitted for approval in accordance with the timetable in the agreed plan.

As with all specialist areas, the Council recommends working with a recognised public art professional in preparing schemes for submission to planning (Stage 1) and in the project management of public art schemes (Stage 2) to ensure that they are of high quality and meet the council's requirements. The Council can provide a list of suitable local public art consultants who have worked in the area.

For an introductory discussion and advice about public art and your project or scheme, please email [alison.catlin@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:alison.catlin@southglos.gov.uk) to book in a call with you.

## Examples of public art projects in South Gloucestershire

**Barnhill, Chipping Sodbury** – commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council and Chelverton Deeley Freed with Waitrose and Bloor Homes. Project manager – Ginkgo Projects.



Inspired by the unique geology of the site and using stone rich with fossil remains from the local quarry, artist Alastair Mackie produced a series of sculptural waymarkers that also act as birdfeeders. The waymarkers run from the start of the development by Waitrose to the lake at the back in the Bloor Homes development to unify the scheme. Sodbury Parish Council were central to the commissioning process and the artist worked with local experts and the local community to develop the scheme. It was launched with a workshop in collaboration with the RSPB during the school holidays to celebrate the local birds the sculptures would attract.

<https://www.ginkgoprojects.co.uk/constellation-barnhill>

**St James Mews, Charfield** – commissioned by Bellway Homes. Project manager - Studio Response



Drawing on the diversity of local birdlife, artist Kerry Lemon worked with the local primary school to develop a series of artworks that run through this site. She produced life-sized bird sculptures to sit on the street signs, engraved pavers for the footpath, repeat pattern tiles for otherwise blank walls and two weather vanes. There are stories of residents knitting little woollen hats for the tiny bird sculpture so prized are they by the residents.

<https://kerrylemon.co.uk/BIRDING>

**Lyde Green Community Centre** – project managed as part of the building construction



Architectural glass artist Andrew Moor liaised with the residents association who recommended local beauty spots to be photographed for the artwork. The window vinyls bring the green space valued by residents into the building whilst the dichroic glass fins change colour as the light changes and add interest and drama to the building, making it a focal point for the community.

<https://andrewmoor.com/public-art-lyde-green-community-college.html>

**North Yate New Neighbourhood Public Art programme Phase 1** – commissioned by Barratt Homes. Project manager - Suzanne Heath



Artist Jo Lathwood's temporary pavilion, *Home from Home*, is designed to provide a meeting space and venue for arts activities as the Ladden Garden community develops and before more permanent venues like the community centre are available. *Home from Home* was created from repurposed waste material and timber offcuts from building sites, including the development itself and the Whirlpool washing machine factory in Yate. It is hosting an engagement programme of creative events and activities, led by visiting and local artists and creatives. Events will include family days, workshops with hands on making, performances, walks, talks and exhibitions with artists from Yate and beyond. This engagement programme is being delivered with project partner Yate Parish using funding they secured from Arts Council England.

<http://www.suzanneheath.co.uk/project/homefromhome/>