

Art & Design in the Public Realm – Planning Advice Note

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.

What do we mean by public art?

Ixia, the think tank which provides guidance on the role of Public Art, defines Public Art as three types of activity, one or more of which may be relevant or appropriate for a particular site:

1. Art in public places, for example permanent artworks like the Angel of the North or temporary interventions as part of a series or festival;
2. Art as public space, when artist collaborate with design and other professionals and members of the public on the function and design of buildings and spaces; and
3. Socially-engaged practice, when the involvement of individual members of the public or specific group is at the centre of the artist's work

Artists can work collaboratively in a variety of ways to contribute to public realm and building projects, including

- Working as a member of the design team, and engaging with the context and function of the development
- Contributing to the master planning process at a conceptual level and contributing to the social and sensory dimensions of place-making
- Working creatively with communities in order to explore, identify and articulate priorities and issues within the locale
- Creating innovative temporary works in order to engage with the community or to reveal aspects of the site as it undergoes a period of change

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.

Options for Art

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

It can be permanent or temporary. It can be socially engaged practice working with new or existing communities.

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.

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

What ever its form, public art should be unique and inspiring with one consistent quality: it should be site-specific and relate to the context or use of a particular site or location within the public realm.

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 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.

Why Public Art?

Public Art is widely recognised as having a broad range of benefits including:

- Environmental – regeneration, place-making, identity
- Economic – encourages inward investment, promotes a sense of confidence and positivity
- Social – promotes civic and personal pride, encourages people to rediscover and interact with their environment, used as a tool to facilitate social inclusion
- Cultural – community development tool, raises the profile of the arts in general, offers opportunities for people to participate in the arts

The NPPF states that the social role of the planning system should create '*a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being*' and the Council recognises the significance of public art within this.

In line with this the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy (adopted December 2013) Policy CS23 - Community Infrastructure and Cultural Activity states that '*The Council will work with partners to provide additional, extended or enhanced community infrastructure and encourage participation in cultural activity. Developers of Major Residential Schemes, and schemes that will attract a large number of users, will be required to demonstrate how their proposals will contribute to the objectives of the South Gloucestershire Cultural, Heritage and Arts Strategies, through the provision of additional, extended or enhanced facilities and access to/or facilitation of art and cultural activities for the new residents*'.

Particular reference is made to the provision of public art within the PPG; in the guidance relating to well-designed public spaces the PPG states:

“Public art and sculpture can play an important role in making interesting and exciting places that people enjoy using.” This is highlighted in South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy (adopted December 2013) Policy CS1 – High Quality Design Point 7 *‘Where the scale, location and/or significance of the new development proposals warrants it, embed public art within the public realm or in a location where it can be viewed from public areas.’*

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.

The provision of public art is a key indicator of good design (building for life criteria) and should be seen as an opportunity to involve the local community in support of our Sustainable Community Strategy objectives. The NPPF also states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Both these aims are supported by the integration of high quality public art.

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.

Integration in to the Design and Planning process

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 as appropriate.

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 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.

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. The PPG recognises public art as part of the important details of a development proposal and reinforces this in the section which addresses the definition of Reserved Matters and includes, within landscaping, the provision of public art.

Inclusion at the earliest stages enables all opportunities to be assessed, other areas to be influenced and, if possible, to enhance existing budgets through design fees from the public art budget.

As with all specialist areas, the Council recommends working with a recognised public art professional in preparing schemes for submission to planning and in the project

management of public art schemes to ensure that they are of high quality and meet the council's requirements.

Public art plans presented at outline stage as part of the Design and Access Statement should 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
- Artists brief/s
- Arrangements for commissioning, including a longlist of artists if appropriate
- Proposed implementation plan including phasing.
- Arrangements for project management.
- Budget allocation.
- Maintenance and Health & Safety.

Final details (including detailed designs for any permanent features) should be agreed as part of Reserved Matters.

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