

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Planning Policy Sub-Committee Council	Date: 4 September 2017 28 September 2017
Subject:	Gloucester Public Realm Strategy	
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy	
Wards Affected:	Westgate	
Key Decision:	Yes	Budget/Policy Framework: No
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Appendices:	1. Gloucester Public Realm Strategy 2. Consultation responses report 3. Minutes of the Planning Policy Sub Committee	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks agreement to allow the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy to be adopted by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 1.2 The Public Realm Strategy will be used to support the regeneration of the City and will form part of the evidence base for the City Plan in due course. This document will also be used in the Development Management process to ensure schemes are of a high quality and preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the historic environment.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Planning Policy Sub-Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:**

That the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy be approved for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

- 2.2 Council is asked to **RESOLVE:**

That the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy be approved for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The public realm within Gloucester has developed and changed over the 1900 years since the founding of the original Roman settlement, and continues to change as part of the various regeneration and redevelopment projects within the City.
- 3.2 There have been a series of significant public realm projects completed in recent times. The Gloucester Quays retail outlet opened in 2009 and part of that development saw the provision of very high-quality areas of new public realm. The Linkages project (the route from Gloucester Quays to the City Centre) saw the redevelopment of the public realm along the eastern side of Victoria Dock and the area around Kimbrose Triangle, Commercial Road and Southgate Street, during 2010. An area of approximately 16,200 metres sq. was covered by these two projects, which have raised the overall level of public realm quality considerably.
- 3.3 Proposals for other significant public realm projects are being developed, including for the open spaces within the Bakers Quay mixed use development, Orchard Square (part of the Docks area), the new bus station, and within the Cathedral Precincts (part of Project Pilgrim). There are also emerging plans for other strategic sites, including the former Gloucester Prison and the adjacent Greater Blackfriars area.
- 3.4 Much of the existing older public realm within the Gate Streets and other parts of the wider City Centre, dates back to the early to mid 1990s, which is now around 25 years old. The emergence of the recent public realm projects has highlighted the dated nature of much of the existing public realm provision within the City Centre, but also the need to provide guidance for new public realm proposals as they emerge. It is important to support the emerging public realm projects with specific guidance on appropriate materials, areas for improvement and broad design principles.
- 3.5 A six week period of public consultation was carried out from 15 March to 26 April, 2017. An information and summary leaflet was produced as part of that process which summarised the main aspects of the strategy. Digital e-alerts were sent out to nearly 7,000 subscribers and more than 400 letters were posted to the City Plan consultation database. Consultation packs, including a printed and bound copy of the draft strategy, accompanying leaflet and response forms, were provided to all the public libraries in Gloucester, as well as to the Guildhall and the City Council's Reception.
- 3.6 There were a total of 16 responses to the consultation, including representations from the CPRE, Historic England, Natural England, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Canal & River Trust, Gloucestershire County Council and White Young Green (WYG) on behalf of Gloucester Quays LLP.
- 3.7 The response report in Appendix 2, sets out all of the consultation representations which were received as part of the public consultation exercise. The report sets out which parts of the draft consultation document have been amended and the reasoning for these alterations. The vast majority of alterations concern minor graphical or layout issues, with the layout of section 5.5 onwards being altered to

reduce the amount of blank areas on pages and to reduce the overall length of the document. The Category of Spaces plan has also been amended with the addition of a number of labels which identify landmarks within the City Centre, as set out in the promotional leaflet which formed part of the public consultation.

- 3.8 The most significant alteration has been the addition of a number of paragraphs, within chapters 1, 3 and 4, which caveat the use of the term 'public realm' applied to existing areas of private land. Examples include Baker's Quay and Gloucester Quays, The Docks and the Cathedral Precincts. While supportive of the aims of the Strategy, the representation did raise an objection specifically relating to the private areas of land owned by Gloucester Quays LLP. The representation did suggest a number of potential alterations and the response report clarifies which of the suggestions have been followed. A number of paragraphs have been added which explain which areas are specifically privately owned, but which for the purposes of the Public Realm Strategy, are identified within the document as 'public realm'.
- 3.9 Overall, a range of comments have been provided through the public consultation process, which have led to improvements to the document. It is recommended that the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to ensure public realm schemes are of a high quality and preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the historic environment.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 The aim of the document is for members of the public, consultants, Council officers and developers to be able to use the guide to assist with informing the design of public realm schemes within the City Centre as part of any development management or strategic project. This guidance will help ensure that schemes are well considered and meet the City Council's requirements leading to a better quality environment.

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 Failure to recommend these documents for public consultation would result in the City Council not providing a positive and pro-active approach to regeneration within City. This positive approach is also recommended with the National Planning Policy Framework and would also form part of the evidence base for the forthcoming City Plan. The work will also feed into the City Plan development control policies.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Gloucester Public Realm Strategy has been developed to help support the regeneration of the city centre and will form part of the evidence base for the City Plan in due course. The strategy is recommended for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document, as this will provide strong and clear planning guidance to be used in the Development Management process to ensure schemes are of a high quality, which preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the historic environment.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 Following adoption of the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy, proposed public realm projects will be guided by the principles and suggestions set out in the document. It is also intended that the strategy will form part of the evidence base for the emerging City Plan, which will support the continuing provision of high quality areas of public realm, for the benefit of local residents and businesses, as well as visitors to Gloucester.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The progression of wider public realm improvements within the City Centre would require a significant financial commitment that would need to be carefully assessed and programmed within the Council's overall budget. As with all capital projects any public realm improvement project would be required to identify sources of funding to enable the project to be delivered.

- 8.2 The document sets out various paving materials and items of furniture to be used for each of the identified main categories of spaces. These materials are intended to be indicative and represent a guide to the quality standard which is suitable. There is a cost implication for the higher quality materials, such as natural sandstone or granite, but there is also an element of cost saving over the lifetime of the scheme due to the increased robustness of these materials.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Following the adoption of the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document, the Public Realm Strategy will become a material consideration in planning terms. The document can then be used to guide the design and implementation of public realm within the City, to enable the Council to promote high standards of design leading to a better quality environment.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 10.1 A low risk has been identified as a result of this report. This low risk involves the possibility that the Public Realm Strategy is not adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document and therefore the quality of public realm within the City being adversely affected.

- 10.2 The main opportunity is to achieve higher standards of public realm if the document is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 11.1 The aim of the Public Realm Strategy is for members of the public, consultants, developers and City Council Officers to use the guide to assist with informing the design of the public realm within the City as part of any development management scheme. This guidance will ensure that schemes are well considered and meet the City Council's requirements leading to a better quality environment.

11.2 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

12.1 There are a number of recommendations and issues identified in the Public Realm Strategy which could have implications for community safety, were these recommendations not put into practice. However, the process of adopting the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document has no community safety implications. There are however a number of positive implications for the overall quality of the public realm, including the safety of the general public, if the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Section 4.9 of the document (design affecting visually impaired, disabled and elderly groups) deals generally with safety issues and sets out a range of principles.

Sustainability

12.2 The Public Realm Strategy supports the process of achieving sustainable development and will contribute to the improvement of the city centre for both residents and visitors to Gloucester. The document when adopted would ensure proposals have a positive impact on the environment of Gloucester.

Staffing & Trade Union

12.3 No impacts.

Background Documents: None