

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Cabinet	Date:	30 January 2017 8 February 2017
Subject:	Gloucester Public Realm Strategy 2017 – Public Consultation Draft		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Matt Haslam, Urban Design Officer		
	Email: matt.haslam@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel: 396847	
Appendices:	1. Gloucester Public Realm Strategy 2016 - Public Consultation Draft		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 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 be 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. This report seeks agreement to allow the document to progress to a 6 week period of public consultation prior to recommendation of adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to **NOTE** the report and to provide any recommendations it considers necessary to Cabinet.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that the 'Gloucester Public Realm Strategy 2017 - Public Consultation Draft' be approved for a six week period of public consultation.

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 (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 some 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 Results from an informal furniture audit, carried out as part of the initial research stages of the Public Realm Strategy, led to the identification of various issues within the Gate Streets and other surrounding streets.
- 3.6 An internal consultation process has been undertaken, comments were received from 14 internal consultees, from departments including Planning and Planning Policy, Neighbourhood Management, Conservation and Heritage, Archaeology, Landscape and Trees, and Graphic Design. Specific meetings were arranged with a number of the consultees to get more detailed comments. The vast majority of comments made by consultees were incorporated into the Public Consultation Draft document.
- 3.7 The main alterations to the document following the internal consultation included the following items.
 - A reduction in the overall length of the document to make it more concise;
 - An executive summary at the start of the document was inserted to allow people to get a quick impression of the content of the full document;
 - Many of the context photos within the document were removed, to improve legibility and to create a more positive tone;
 - The main plans which illustrate the key principles and information within the document have been made clearer; and
 - The palette of materials proposed for the three main categories of spaces was finalised.
- 3.8 A further alteration has been made to the document to focus more on the principles and broader design guidelines, by removing references to specific projects which are to be included within an internal project plan.
- 3.9 As improvements are made to historic and strategically significant areas within the City Centre, the Public Realm Strategy will act as a guide to future redevelopment projects.

- 3.10 Once the document is finalised following public consultation, it is intended that a summary leaflet will also be produced to provide an accessible overview of the document and the principles within it.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 The aim of the document is for members of the public, consultants and developers to use the guide to assist with informing the design of public realm within the City Centre as part of any development management or strategic project. This guidance will 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 A resolution is requested to allow the Public Realm Strategy to go out for a period of public consultation. The document will be used to support the regeneration of the city centre and will form part of the evidence base for the City Plan in due course. A further report will be submitted for the documents to be recommended for adoption as Supplementary Planning Documents, this will enable these to 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.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 During the six week consultation, the draft strategy will be available on the Council's website, at libraries and at Council offices. Letters and email notifications will be sent to a range of statutory and general consultees as well as contacts registered on the Local Plan database.
- 7.2 Following consideration by Cabinet, the Public Realm Strategy will progress to a six week period of public consultation. The comments and feedback received during the period of public consultation will be considered and where necessary, changes will be made to the documents.
- 7.3 Following this, the document will return to Members for approval to adopt as a Supplementary Planning Document which will form part of the City Plan evidence base. In due course, the Strategy will form a basis of the development management policies within the City Plan.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications of significance associated with the public consultation period.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 The draft strategy 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 initial period of public consultation, the Public Realm Strategy will gain a level of weight within the planning process, and 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 of the Public Realm Strategy not being adopted as an SPD 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 planning and design guidance.

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. The Strategy also considers and sets out guidelines for the on-going maintenance and reinstatement of public realm.

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 carrying out the public consultation on the Public Realm Strategy has no community safety implications.

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