

Creating a Canvas for Public Life

Draft Bath Public Realm and Movement Strategy

Executive Summary

1) Context for the Bath Public Realm and Movement Strategy:

- Describes and illustrates the decline of the public realm and the impact of the car on the quality and experience of Bath city centre. The decline has occurred gradually over decades and is at risk of undermining Bath's success and potential as a place.
- Outlines Bath's outstanding past achievements, particularly in the 18th Century when its remarkable town planning and significant investment in the quality and management of streetscape created a beautiful, coherent and vibrant public realm that was recognised throughout Europe.
- Presents the opportunity to view the forthcoming development and growth agenda as a once in a lifetime opportunity to look at the city centre as a whole, and to develop a coherent, long-term vision and delivery plan for the transformation and revitalisation of its streets and spaces.
- Proposes a series of design values and place attributes (to be further developed in a Bath Pattern Book) which reflects Bath's DNA and individuality as a place.

2) The strategy is based on a big idea: that Bath's public realm - the streets and spaces between its buildings - should be recognised, invested in and managed as one of the city's most exciting assets. It proposes that Bath should become the UK's most walkable city, and the public realm should be viewed as the canvas upon which a healthier, more vibrant and inclusive public life, a more dynamic and more successful economic life, and a more distinctive and creative brand identity for the city can be established.

3) For the first time in recent history, the strategy establishes a Public Realm Plan for the future of the city centre which:

- Sets out a bold and ambitious long term framework for the transformation of the public realm through the creation of a network, or *lattice*, of connected, pedestrian-friendly streets and spaces.
- Adopts a pragmatic and opportunistic approach to delivery that can be implemented in phases over the next 10-20 years as new developments and investment opportunities, and public transport infrastructure are realised.
- Creates an end goal to guide and shape individual developments and public realm improvement schemes within the centre so, like pieces of a jigsaw, they incrementally contribute to the fulfilment of an overall picture of a unified, connected and refashioned public realm, where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

4) The Public Realm Plan is underpinned by four key composing elements, which are explored in further detail, and for which individual but connected strategies are proposed. The composing elements are identified as:

- **Rebalancing Bath's Movement and Spatial Structure** - for which the strategy seeks to build on the current Greater Bristol Bus Network, Bath Package, and EU CIVITAS projects and future Transport Innovation Fund and other projects, to rebalance the city's movement systems, creating a movement hierarchy where,

starting with the city centre, the pedestrian, the cyclist and public transport are given priority over the car.

- **Refashioning Street-Spaces and Riverscape** - for which the strategy identifies a series of streets and spaces (including riverside spaces and promenades) which can be reclaimed or, in the case of new development, created for public life. It also proposes the introduction of a range of high quality, bespoke street furniture and one natural-stone street surface to gradually create greater unity and quality within the city centre, gluing together old and new parts of an expanded centre and increasing Bath's distinctiveness, attractiveness and competitiveness as a World Heritage Site and international visitor destination.
- **Revealing the City through a new Wayfinding and City Information System** - for which the strategy is to develop an integrated, multi-modal, user-friendly information and wayfinding system which transforms the user's experience of the city centre both before and during their visit. This will be articulated through a series of physical and virtual products ranging from online information maps to physical maps and information sheets, to on-street wayfinding signage and panels, and potentially, to downloadable information accessed via mobile phone technology. It is proposed that the design concept for the graphic and physical wayfinding and information products is developed within the same design concept as the new range of bespoke street furniture products in order to create a sense of design coherence and visual unity across a wide range of products.
- **Re-Animating Public Life within the City** - where it is proposed that the strategy connects to a range of other existing and forthcoming Arts, Cultural, Sports, Health, and Leisure strategies including the emerging B&NES Cultural Strategy to bring about a more vibrant, animated, creative, playful, inclusive and contemporary public realm. This would host a year round programme of cultural and community events and activities within the city's streets, public spaces and parks and on and along its riverside.

5) The Strategy proposes an outline action-plan to be further developed through further consultation and discussion which:

- Recommends a significant first phase of investment over the next 3-5 years which focuses on transforming;

I) The North/South access between Milsom Street to the North and the new SouthGate development to the South;

II) The East/West access along Cheap Street and Westgate Street, to connect to the proposed Bath Package improvements to the High Street, to the East and potential development proposals for Saw Close to the West. This would include creating simplified pedestrian-priority streets and spaces, resurfaced in natural-stone and showcasing the proposed new range of high quality street furniture and wayfinding products. These proposals are currently being costed by the Development and Major Projects Project Management team. Subject to funding, this first phase programme could technically be delivered within the transport infrastructure and management controls due to be implemented by the Bath Package.

- Links to and supports the objectives of Future Bath Plus and the new City Centre Manager in focussing on a number of short-term public realm improvements and actions ('quick wins') to improve the existing streetscape.
- Recommends the development of additional strategies for lighting, public art, and trees/landscape.

Appendix 1

- Offers a menu of long-term public realm and movement improvements some of which can be delivered within existing transport infrastructure, and others, which would need to await further transport measures, which can be progressed as investment and development contributions come forward. Ultimately, these improvements will result in the delivery of the long-term Public Realm Plan and the Canvas for Public Life.
- Recommends that attention must be given to reviewing the Council's structure and management arrangements and to the future role of Future Bath Plus in order to create the most effective mechanisms and funding arrangements for delivery and future maintenance. These mechanisms must ensure the highest quality of design leadership as well as tight project management controls.

- Streets
- Arrival and departure spaces
- Destination squares and spaces
- Intimate spaces
- Parks, gardens and recreational spaces

