

Chapter 12: Public Art

Introduction

- 12.1 Both Councils place significant importance on the provision of public art and support best practice in its commissioning. Successful public art demonstrates ambition, innovation and is relevant to its context. It should genuinely engage people, including sections of the community that are hard-to-reach and contribute to local identity. The only constant element of public art is that it is artist-led and community or site specific.
- 12.2 A wide range of permanent, temporary and process-led works have been developed with communities and these have helped shape the public realm, played a role in integrating existing and new communities, contributing positively to quality of life and bringing social benefits. This has led to the creation of a rich and diverse portfolio of high-quality public art across Greater Cambridge with lasting legacies. Public art is supported as a key element of placemaking, through engaging with a diverse audience about issues directly relevant to their lives and ensuring equitable provision and access across all communities.

Policy Context

Cambridge

- 12.3 Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 56 requires the design of new buildings, and the spaces around them, to embed public art as an integral part of the proposal. In this context, public art is considered a key component of successful placemaking. Policy 59 seeks the provision of a high-quality public realm both within and adjoining development sites that takes a coordinated approach to the design and siting of street furniture, boundary treatments, lighting, signage and public art. Policy 85 recognises that planning obligations can include cultural facilities, including public art.
- 12.4 Implementation of the public art policies of the Local Plan are further supplemented by guidance set out in the [Cambridge City Council Public Art SPD 2010](#) that remains a material consideration. The SPD provides a comprehensive guide to enable the successful delivery of public art linked to development proposals, including a basis for calculating the value to be attributed to the delivery of a public art scheme and its maintenance (subject to viability and scale of proposal).

- 12.5 In March 2022, the City Council adopted a Manifesto for Public Art entitled 'The Cambridge Perspective: Art Artists Community Place Change (Art and Artists at the Heart of Community)'. This is a public declaration of the City's intentions for developing public art.

South Cambridgeshire

- 12.6 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 Policy HQ/2 encourages the provision or commissioning of public art that is integrated into the design of development as a means of enhancing the quality of development proposals. Policies HQ/2 and SC/4 further require the provision of public art to involve the local community, suggesting it could also be community-led, and should have regard to the local circumstances of the site and/or local aspirations. The policies also clarify the approach to be taken where a scheme is unable to achieve suitable provision onsite and, where public art is provided, that a contribution or commuted sums will be required for ongoing maintenance and to cover the cost of decommissioning where appropriate.
- 12.7 The [District Design Guide SPD \(2010\)](#) paragraphs 6.54 – 6.61 provides guidance regarding the successful delivery of public art, reiterating the requirement for public art to be designed in parallel with the design of buildings and spaces. It advises that the artwork may be large or small, mobile or static, integral to a building or freestanding, fine art or functional and produced for external or internal public spaces. It further establishes the approach for determining the level of public art provision.

Development types from which Obligations will be sought

- 12.8 All forms of major development are required to make provision for public art.
- 12.9 For Outline planning permission, planning applications should provide a Public Art Strategy, including indicative budget. For Full Planning and Reserved Matters applications, these should be supported by a Public Art Delivery Plan.

Form in which contributions should be made

- 12.10 Where the 1% value of the estimated capital construction costs of a project is likely to exceed £100,000 i.e. where capital construction costs are estimated to exceed £10,000,000 a s106 obligation will be the vehicle to secure the delivery of a Public Art Strategy or Public Art Delivery Plan. Public art will be secured via planning condition where the 1% value is below this figure.

- 12.11 Where a s106 obligation is required, an attributable value equivalent to 1% of the capital construction costs should be the starting point for the development of a Public Art Strategy or Public Art Delivery Plan.
- 12.12 For major development on very large and complex sites, where the capital value reaches tens of millions of pounds, a 1% public art value may not be an appropriate measure for setting budgets. In such cases, budgets will be agreed through negotiation on a case-by-case basis, subject to meeting the policy objectives. These negotiations will be informed from thorough evaluation processes and the technical knowledge of public art expertise. In all cases, 1% (index linked) remains the starting point for any negotiations for public art, on any site.
- 12.13 Unless otherwise agreed, VAT and other taxes are not seen as being eligible costs. The public art budget does not include the preparation of materials and information required to be submitted as part of the planning application. Using the public art budget to fund capital items is not accepted except as an enhancement of the cost of the capital item and the added value of the contribution must be demonstrated.

Approach

- 12.14 Public art should be developed through a three-way partnership between the developer, an art consultant, and the Council and involve consultation with the local community. The s106 agreement should include an agreed and negotiated commuted sum based on the complexity and timelines as set out in each Public Art Delivery Plan or Strategy to cover the Council's requirement for its own public art expertise to support its delivery. This will ensure the facilitation, oversight, and monitoring of the development and delivery of public art, which, on large sites, can span years. As required by both Local Plans, the provision of the public art must be integrated into the design of a new development.

Cambridge City Council

- 12.15 As set out in section 5.7 of the Public Art SPD, art and art practice continually evolve. For example, digital and web-based projects may be as valid as physical projects for inclusion within public art proposals. Consequently, it is not appropriate to try to define what art forms and functions are suitable, whether delivered by s106 agreements or other means. Traditional, contemporary and experimental work should be supported, and the choice will depend on the context and purpose. One of the aims of the SPD is to provide

criteria and a framework for debate that can address a wide range of views. A critical requirement is that the commissioned work should be original, of high quality, designed for the community and produced or facilitated by an artist or craftsman. In terms of delivery, projects may focus on the process as much as the product and be community based.

South Cambridgeshire District Council

12.16 As set out in the supporting text to policy SC/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, public art can encompass a wide range of approaches. It could include designing a development so that functional elements such as lighting, seating, fencing, landscape, fountains and water features, and signage are bespoke or it could be a landmark work such as a sculpture. Alternatively, it could include provision of space, facilities and/or to enable performing arts, and play a role in linking existing and new residents in a community and help bring existing and new residents together which can help build new communities.

Exemptions

12.17 The decision on the exemption of public art within new development will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis but will include consideration if it is not possible to achieve an appropriate publicly visible artwork on or close to the development site. In such circumstances, a financial contribution to support public art initiatives within the vicinity of the development may be sought, especially if the development is in an area deemed deficient in public art as demonstrated through the Council's public art audit.

Further guidance

- [South Cambridgeshire Public Art Supplementary Planning Document \(2009\)](#)
- [South Cambridgeshire District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document \(2010\)](#)
- [Public Art Supplementary Planning Document - Cambridge City Council \(2010\)](#)

The Council provides a [Youth Engagement Service](#) (YES). It aims to ensure that children and young people, who are often under-represented groups in our society, have genuine input into a development proposal, including the design of buildings, play spaces, public realm and public art at the early stage of the planning process.

Other Sources

- [Arts Council](#)
- [Public Art Online](#)