

Derby's Public Art Strategy

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This Strategy is arranged in two parts. The first provides the background and strategic context ("Introduction" to "Best Practice"). The second identifies five assets of the City of Derby that should be used as essential concepts for future public art schemes ("Surprising City" to "City of Innovation").

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Introduction

“Culture is always a response to circumstance, location, history and landscape and its values leave tangible marks. Today, we need to create new markers that reflect our present culture that will inspire others in the future in the same way that we can enjoy the legacy of the past.”

CABE Artists & Places, 2008

Public Art generates a culture of creativity and helps to promote the image of a creative city. Professional artists’ skills, visions and creative abilities imbue our city’s spaces and places with a unique quality and enliven and animate space by creating a visually stimulating environment.

This publication provides an aspirational strategy for the development of public art in Derby. It underlines the importance of the visual arts in the public realm. It identifies the unique qualities of Derby that make it a special place to live, work or visit. It will raise awareness of the many opportunities for exploring and reinforcing the City’s identity through public art.

Contemporary public art positively contributes to how Derby is perceived.

This publication is for everyone involved in developing and transforming Derby’s buildings and public spaces; developers, designers, communities and artists.

SUMMARY

Our Strategy is to:

1. Integrate public art into all major development and public realm projects

What is Public Art?

The widest possible definition of public art is proposed – the artist's contribution to the development, appearance, and the experience of the public realm.

“Public realm” is everything we see and experience in public spaces. It includes architecture, squares, streets, green spaces and wilderness.

Public Art is a collaborative approach where creativity and culture overlap with the public realm. The results produce both permanent and temporary commissions of craft and sculpture; architecture and design lighting and water installation; film, photography and new technologies; literature and poetry; performance and celebratory arts; as well as social, environmental community and participatory arts.

2. Engage high quality artists at the beginning of every project

The Role of the Artist

In our strategy artists are valued and appointed as:

Members of design teams – contributing to regeneration projects through research, reflection, and resulting propositions which address the context and functions of a specific site.

Creative agents in communities

In order to explore and articulate issues of local significance

Commentators, researchers and ‘provocateurs’

Producing either permanent or temporary public art that explores and expresses the often hidden nature of a particular place.

3. Explore the identity and ambition of Derby through its Public Art

Key Assets

Public Art contributes to “place shaping” it derives inspiration from the fundamental identity of the city. Public Art must recognise what Derby has that sets it apart from other cities and places.

There are five key aspects to Derby's identity outlined in this document that represent the assets of the City.

Surprising City

River City

Heritage City

Green City

City of Innovation

Strategic Approach

Public art is not an art form, but a principle

Context

Arts Strategy

Public Art occupies a prominent place in the City's Arts Strategy. Now, we need to develop artists' involvement in our City's public spaces. We need to support artists and give them greater influence to ensure their creative approach becomes enshrined in the way we think about our city.

Public Realm Strategy

The public realm strategy pioneered by Derby Cityscape, seeks "to enhance the unique identity of the city by providing it with the best possible public realm. This should improve the quality of life and strengthen investor confidence in Derby".

Derby's Wayfinding Strategy

The work involved in producing Derby's Wayfinding Strategy is demonstrating the need for the city's spaces to be punctuated and defined by distinctive landmarks and identifying features.

Private Sector

Private sector developers should enhance the value and attractiveness of environments by incorporating exciting and challenging public artworks. The Council's planning powers will be used to encourage and reinforce this approach.

Derby's Cultural Strategy

"We believe that cultural and learning experiences have a profound effect on every individual in terms of physical and mental wellbeing, self respect and sense of belonging."

The Cultural Strategy's principal aims are:

- Improving the quality of life
- Promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity
- Contributing to regeneration and prosperity

Derby's Sustainable Community Strategy "Derby's 2020 Vision; a city for all ages" provides the framework for our Cultural Strategy.

Derby City Council's Corporate Plan provides a driver for the improvement of the city's centre and its neighbourhoods

East Midlands Cultural Strategy

Derby's Cultural Strategy supports the Vision contained in the East Midlands Cultural Strategy: "Our Vision is simple, it is for the East Midlands to be the place of choice for people to enjoy, create, work and take part in culture." That Vision is dedicated to meeting a number of identified challenges:

- Building better infrastructure
- Improving cultural leadership
- Increasing aspiration
- Encouraging culturally diverse and priority group participation

Best Practice

Best Practice

Public art can be commissioned by either private or public sector organisations or communities themselves for a wide range of places and spaces. The process should embrace the best practice principles as follows.

The commissioning of 'professional artists'. Professional artists in this document refers to 'artist' practitioners who carry out arts creations and activities as a professional business.

The early involvement of artists. Public art is about the collaboration and integration of ideas often between artists, architects, landscape architects, urban designers, and the public. The earlier an artist is involved in the design process the more integrated, creative and consequently successful the outcome.

Engagement with communities. Professional artists connect with communities through stakeholder consultation or directly involving them in the development of their own environment helping to instil a sense of ownership.

A site specific response. "The art should have sympathy with and some effect on the site in which it is placed". (Richard Wilson: artist)

Environmental Responsibility. Artworks should aim to minimise the impact on the environment and climate change, both in their production and use.

Responsibilities

The City Council will:

- Integrate public art into all of its own major public works and buildings
- Expect other public sector organisations to do the same
- Provide advice and support to the private sector on best practice and the benefits public art can bring
- To use this strategy to identify the concepts best suited to public art schemes in the city
- Broker relationships with external agencies with an interest in public art
- Track the progress of environmental projects so as to spot opportunities for public art collaborations
- Use Planning obligations and conditions to ensure that private sector developers deliver public art
- Promote quality public artworks as part of the city's cultural and tourism offer
- Coordinate or advise on public consultation
- Foster public art as an expression of the city's diversity

Private and public sector developers are expected to:

- Integrate public art into all major buildings and developments
- Employ high quality professional artists in the creation of public art
- Appoint artists as full members of design teams
- Appreciate the added value that artists can bring to projects, and be ready to pay for it
- Involve artists at the beginning of a project, not as an afterthought
- Adopt a broad and adventurous definition of public art as set out in this strategy

Surprising City

A city should have surprises that delight, have humour, give edge and mischief to inspire, engage and stir

Derby is a compact city that is in the main naturally legible; its public landmarks help you to understand where you are and where you are heading. It is both historic and contemporary, and it has some great detail and inspiring views. Yet, it is a city with aspects of mystery and delight often unseen or unappreciated. Surprise and delight can be unlocked from grand vistas, hidden alleyways, underground features but also sensory and contextual references that together help give meaning and uniqueness to a place. Detail can be hidden, unnoticed or minute enough to be absorbed without knowledge. These elements, massive or subtle, can be accentuated, punctuated or brought to life in a way that can invite enquiry and interest.

Artists are invited to:

- Draw attention to the city's hidden architectural delights
- Stimulate the onlooker's curiosity
- Surprise us all
- Challenge our accepted wisdom
- Make us smile at what we see, hear and feel

River City

Refocusing on the presence of the River

The River forms the most significant link between the City and the surrounding countryside, both for wildlife and people. It forms an important reference point and is extended by green spaces at Bass Recreation Ground, Cathedral Green and Darley Park. It is the river that drove the industrial revolution for which Derby is famous and it may be symbolic of our sustainable future at a time when natural resources are being challenged by natural events such as climate change.

Artists are invited to:

- Intensify our experience of the river
- Provide attractors that draw us towards the river
- Re-interpret the river and the theme of water
- Help to design bridges that give delight in their form and function

Heritage City

Creating a positive identity that best characterises the city's tradition in innovation and creativity

Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

A city is constantly evolving both physically and culturally. Derby's origins as a Roman town are still evident and relevant today. The Derwent Valley pioneered large-scale industrial production in a hitherto rural landscape. The need to provide housing and other facilities for workers and managers resulted in the creation of an exceptional industrial landscape that has retained its qualities over two centuries.

Derby City Centre and its Neighbourhoods

Derby is a city of historic interest and architectural merit. It has a range of streets and buildings which span many centuries. The richness of this country's architectural heritage plays an important and influential part in our sense of national, regional and local identity. Historic buildings are a precious and finite asset, and they are powerful reminders to us of the work and way of life of earlier generations.

Artists are invited to:

- Enhance the impact of our historic environments
- Help us to understand the past
- Re-interpret historic themes as an inspiration for the future
- Give us reasons to be proud of our neighbourhoods

Green City

Develop the natural assets of the city such as landscape, wildlife, habitats through imaginative and sensitive interpretation

Derby is located within the Derbyshire countryside and has an intrinsic green and natural environment. Even though the City is a compact urban area, it contains a wide variety of key habitats and species that can be recognised as significant to the landscape, the local environment and for local communities.

Most of the urban countryside in Derby is contained within green wedges. These areas of open land include parks, schools and farmland that link the surrounding countryside into the city. They give a structure to the city, keeping different communities distinct. They all provide important areas for wildlife and are used by local people for recreation around the city.

Derby's own historic parks, landscaping and strong green infrastructure help connect the city to its surroundings linking the city into the country and the country back into the city, its wildlife and biodiversity.

The City is determined to lower its carbon emissions throughout all walks of life and control its energy consumption now and in the future.

Artists are invited to:

- Use materials that remind us of nature
- Challenge our concepts of sustainability
- Enhance our understanding of the natural world
- Give us reasons to be proud of local products
- Save or generate energy

City of Innovation

Historically Derby has been shaped largely by industry and it continues to be a city noted for innovation, precision engineering and manufacturing. However, as globalisation and the economy challenge us we keep in front by embracing new ideas, techniques and technologies, not only in the field of manufacturing but also in the creative industries and financial services.

As a compact and historic city Derby has great networking potential. This helps to generate the exchange of ideas that will boost the economy and promote the vibrancy of the city. Derby's compactness also enables overlay of its diverse cultures allowing for both individuality and intimacy. Its changing collective identity will drive its future growth.

Artists are invited to:

- Seek new ways of self-expression
- Create public art where it is not expected
- Make innovative connections
- Use new technologies
- Create ephemeral as well as permanent art

Networks and Support

Action Plan

This Strategy is designed to support a dynamic Action Plan which will be updated continually by the Council as conditions change and as schemes emerge and are completed. The Council's Built Environmental Team will hold responsibility for maintaining the Action Plan.

There is a wealth of supportive organisations throughout the region, including Arts Council England East Midlands (ACE EM) who provided the "Public Art Creative Vision and Delivery Plan" which reviewed public art in its broadest sense for the region and to establish gaps in relation to practice and services in order to make recommendations that address short, medium and long term goals.

Public art is not just about improving the quality of our towns and cities. Arts Council England believes that the arts have the power to change lives and communities and that outdoor arts of all types have a particular ability to engage, inform and entertain audiences that might not otherwise attend an arts event.

OPUN is part of the national Architecture Centre Network and under the umbrella of Regeneration East Midlands support good design and focus on skills and capacity. Priorities are Design Excellence, Public Participation and Education.

IXIA: the national public art think tank. Public art is described as the 'process of artists responding to the public realm', and 'art commissioned as a response to the notion of place, art commissioned as part of the designed environment and process based artistic practice that does not rely on the production of an art object.'

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

The 'Public Art Topic Report' in 2006 by the Council's Environment Overview and Scrutiny Commission found that Derby is far behind comparable cities in its appreciation and deployment of public art.

The Commission recommended that provision of one or more iconic pieces of public art that would give Derby a new visual identity. The Commission also supported the facilitation of funding and the use of Section 106 monies as part of a wider vision and master plan.