PlacesMatter!

creating inspirational spaces
a guide for quality public realm in the northwest

Northwest
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

RENEW
northwest
regeneration excellence

englandsnorthwest
BE INSPIRED
“Investing in the quality of the region’s public realm and green spaces is a key transformational action highlighted in the Northwest’s Regional Economic Strategy.

A quality environment is essential for encouraging private sector investment, as well as improving the region’s image as a place to live, work and invest and significantly enhancing quality of life.

The Northwest Regional Development Agency is pleased to support this document, which highlights examples of good practice from within the region and beyond, and aims to inspire those responsible for designing, procuring, managing and investing in our public spaces to raise their aspirations.”

Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive
Northwest Regional Development Agency
“In a Society becoming steadily more privatized with private homes, cars, computers, offices and shopping centers, the public component of our lives is disappearing. It is more and more important to make the cities inviting, so we can meet our fellow citizens face to face and experience directly through our senses. Public life in good quality public spaces is an important part of a democratic life and a full life.”

Jan Gehl, New City Spaces, 2001
This guide is aimed at all people involved in the creation of public realm in the Northwest whether designers, commissioners, managers or community groups. It is for all those engaged in the use, design, implementation and ongoing management and maintenance of our outdoor spaces. It seeks to challenge existing methods of working and to inspire and demand a committed and holistic approach to the design and management of public realm. This publication is the first step to initiating a culture change in the region, raising aspirations and facilitating the creation of the highest quality external environments. The principles set out in this document are not just applicable to the high profile town centre square, they should apply equally to the small neighbourhood centre, community greenspace or the residential street. Quality of design, materials and maintenance must permeate to every level and scale of the outdoor environment throughout the Northwest region.

This guide proposes a framework of qualities and principles that must be considered when developing public realm projects. They provide waymarkers to good design and management methods that are applicable to projects of every scale and settlement type – cities, towns, neighbourhoods – urban to rural. By considering these principles and how they might apply to any developing project we will help to create places that people will love and go back to, appealing to local communities and visitors. Spaces will become a platform for activity, for it is the life and the people within the spaces that give public realm its vibrancy.

“No longer should high quality public realm be considered a ‘desirable’ element of regeneration: it must be an essential ingredient. I hope this document helps placemakers deliver inspirational projects that will raise the profile of all communities throughout the Northwest, reflecting and reinforcing the character of the region.”

Jim Gibson, Partner, Gillespies LLP, 2007
“High quality parks and public spaces are an essential feature of successful neighbourhoods where people want to live, work, play and invest. They are vital to people’s health and the local economy.”

Manifesto for Better Public Space, CABE Space, 2004
A DEFINITION OF PUBLIC REALM

Public realm belongs to everyone, it is part of our everyday lives and it is where we move, meet and market on a daily basis. It is the places we pass through on our daily journeys and the spaces we use for outdoor activities and social interaction. Public realm shapes the image of the places we inhabit, it creates identity and distinctiveness and influences how others see us. Public realm comprises the streets, squares, parks, green spaces and other outdoor places that require no key to access them and are available, without charge for everyone to use.

It is crucial to understand public realm as the total three dimensional envelope. It is the space, its floorplane and integral elements but also the built edges that enclose and define it. Public realm should not be seen in isolation but in the context of its adjacent buildings, their uses and its location in a wider network of public and private space.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

High quality public places are vital for creating harmonious, socially inclusive communities. Without them, we would have nowhere to commune. If successful, they can help reduce crime, improve health and well being and make significant contributions to a better quality of life. In addition, public realm offers unique opportunities to tackle environmental issues of climate change and sustainability and enhance the biodiversity of our local environments.

It is increasingly recognised that investing in quality public space generates tangible, fiscal benefits; stimulating growth in the visitor economy, raising property values and increasing income and profit for local businesses. Never before has the economic argument for high quality public realm been so compelling. Public realm investment has been shown to boost confidence in an area, reverse the cycle of decline and stimulate inward investment. A parallel study carried out by RENEW Northwest and the Northwest Regional Development Agency ‘The Economic Value of Urban Design’ clearly demonstrates the measurable economic benefits of quality design in our towns, cities and neighbourhoods.

FURTHER READING

The Economic Value of Urban Design
NWDA/RENEW Northwest [2007]
Paved with Gold: The Real Value of Good Street Design  CABE Space [2007]
Does Money Grow on Trees?
CABE Space [2005]
Manifesto for Better Public Spaces
CABE Space [2004]
Physical Activity and the Built Environment
CABE [2006]
“Delivering quality public realm is essential to create an environment in which people want to live, work and invest, as is making the most of the region’s natural assets [...] Implementing high quality in the design and commissioning of the built environment needs support from all key partners in the region.”

Northwest Regional Economic Strategy, Baseline Update Report, 2007
PUBLIC REALM AND THE NORTHWEST VISION

England’s Northwest encompasses a vibrant mix of settlements and communities, reflecting the rich history of the area. The large cities and towns of the industrial revolution contrast with the spectacular rural landscape of the Lake District. From the market towns of Cheshire to the resorts of the Lancashire coast and the industrial villages of the Colne Valley, the Northwest is made up of communities of all types and sizes.

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) developed by the Northwest Regional Development Agency in consultation with its stakeholders, sets out a twenty year plan for the area, at the regional, sub-regional and local level that aims to create;

“a dynamic, sustainable, international economy which competes on the basis of knowledge, advanced technology and an excellent quality of life for all.”

Investing in quality in public realm is outlined as a transformational action within the RES and further supported by RPG13, The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West. Therefore achievement in this area is considered fundamental to the success of the overall vision.

Creating inspirational, high quality public spaces will directly enhance quality of life in the region, improve the image of our towns, cities and neighbourhoods and create a high quality visitor experience. Better public realm is vital to developing cleaner, safer communities and realising and nurturing the region’s built heritage assets.

The tourism vision for England’s Northwest is that within ten years, it offers our visitors real excellence and superb experiences, wherever they go. The Tourism Strategy emphasises that this means providing a public realm that is characterised by high quality design that in places is exceptional.

The Northwest Regional Development Agency have produced a number of studies that consider specific regional issues and public realm’s role within these. These documents include: Historic Towns and Cities in England’s Northwest; the Lake District Economic Futures Report; and A New Vision for Northwest Coastal Resorts.

It is crucial that reference is made to these documents when considering public realm schemes in the areas they cover, to ensure any developments fit with the strategies outlined.

An up to date list of the NWDA’s reports and studies is available at: www.nwda.co.uk
“The 18th century definition of architecture as ‘commodity, firmness and delight’ is echoed in today’s briefs calling for architectural solutions which create value, embody the principles of sustainability, and catch the elusive ‘wow’ factor.”

Commodity, Firmness and Delight: A History of Art, Architecture and Public Space, Peter Hunter, 2004

THE QUALITIES OF GOOD DESIGN

Creating a successful public realm is about much more than simply designing a ‘good looking’ scheme. Places that ‘work’ address complex issues of design, function and process. The challenge set by this publication is how to identify and define these qualities of good public realm design and ensure that they are applicable to all schemes, regardless of scale and context.

Whilst a set of accepted urban design qualities have been in the public domain for some time, to date, the qualities of good public realm design have remained elusive. The Roman architect Vitruvius was the first to define good design and identified the qualities of:

COMMODITY or appropriate spatial accommodation, i.e. that the building or space should be functional and accommodate all the required uses;

FIRMNESS or structural stability i.e. that the building should be sufficiently robust and durable;

DELIGHT or attractive appearance i.e. that the building should be aesthetically and culturally attractive.

These three qualities are now accepted as a standard means of measuring quality in architecture, adopted by both CABE and the Design Council for Wales as guidance for design review.

This handbook proposes the adoption of these three key qualities for assessing the quality of public realm. All three are equally applicable to the design of space; it must be functional, suitably robust and delightful. In addition, we must complement these qualities with a fourth dimension, unique to public realm, the concept of:

STEWARDSHIP or management and ownership.

By its very nature public realm is just that, ‘public’- it belongs to everyone, and its design and upkeep is the responsibility of all those involved in place making. Unlike buildings that are often privately owned and locked after opening hours, a sense of ‘stewardship’ is essential to the creation and long-term survival of our public spaces.

MEASURING DESIGN QUALITY

The four abstract qualities of ‘commodity’, ‘firmness’, ‘delight’ and ‘stewardship’ can be broken down into eight key principles:

animation sustainability

durability movement

image sense of place

people places management

Within each, we can identify a number of tangible, often measurable elements that all good public realm designs demonstrate. The diagram opposite shows their relationship to each other and the need to meet or at least address all of these principles when designing public spaces.
“[The Northwest] has vibrant, diverse towns and cities. It is rich in history and heritage. It has a strong and exciting cultural life and wonderful natural assets, including stunning countryside, coastline and areas of natural beauty. Together they provide a quality of life which is one of the region’s strengths and which needs to be maintained and enhanced.”

Northwest Regional Economic Strategy, 2006
REGIONAL DIVERSITY

The Northwest comprises the five sub-regions of Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire and Warrington, and Cumbria. The diversity of places across the Northwest is outstanding. The region contains almost every settlement type found in Britain and this is what makes the Northwest such a rich and vibrant place to live, work and visit.

The extensive variety of settlement types range from major cities, including Liverpool and Manchester, with an international profile to the heritage centres of Carlisle, Chester and Lancaster. Other settlements include the mill towns, reflecting their development through the industrial growth of the area, contrasting with the coastal towns which each build on their location as do the market towns and villages in the rural hinterland. More recently the suburban centres around these core areas have grown and developed and they too need to incorporate a strong and distinctive public realm.

APPROPRIATENESS IS KEY

The 4 key qualities of commodity, firmness, delight and stewardship apply universally to projects of every scale and settlement typology. They are generic waymarkers to good design. High quality public realm is not just the remit of our large towns and cities but should be the aspiration of all our region’s many and diverse places. The lessons learnt from the case studies may be applied to any number of places, from regional city to rural settlement.

However, appropriateness is crucial to successful design and should be the overarching guide to how the qualities and principles are applied. Some principles may not be entirely achievable on a scheme, a number may be given higher priority and others are essential. For example, maintenance is fundamental to ensuring the long-term viability of any project but enhancing biodiversity may be limited in an urban square or streetscape.

The dictionary defines ‘appropriateness’ as that which is “suitable for a particular person(s), condition, occasion, or place”. It is essential that we create public realm that is right and ‘fitting’ for the place.

The Northwest Regional Economic Strategy 2006 highlights the region’s rich assets and encourages the development and enhancement of appeal, distinctiveness and diversity of the “Cultural Offer” in the Northwest.

This means making the most of what is already there and incorporating the 8 principles of quality design in the context of the place. Appropriate design should take into account;

the place hierarchy; its regional identity and significance, level of capital and revenue funding (designing quality public realm does not have to mean big budgets);

the setting; local distinctiveness, character and image, local materials, public art, history and heritage;

the wider context; how it fits into a strategic vision or plan, its connections to other spaces and places;

its function; uses, lifespan and potential levels of management and maintenance

and the audience; its potential users and the local community.
“At a time when home decoration is one of the most popular of British activities, it is remarkable that we are so often asked to put up with a streetscene that is characterised by shabby materials, third-rate workmanship, poor design, redundant signage and other clutter and constant barriers to free movement. We would not accept this in our private realm. Why should we have to endure it in our public spaces?”

Councillor Daniel Moylan, Deputy Leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council, 2004
DO THEY REALLY WORK?

The qualities and principles of good public realm design when addressed appropriately through a holistic approach create the highest quality public spaces. We have all had good (and bad) public realm experiences, we know when a place feels good and we all have our favourite and memorable places which we treasure and visit time and again.

What makes poor places so dissatisfying? Our guess...they probably fail to address a fundamental quality of place creation. Imagine Piccadilly Gardens without its fountain or the Ropewalks in Liverpool without its public art. The best designs aspire to achieve all four qualities of commodity, firmness, delight and stewardship.

PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

The following pages explore how the eight principles of animation, sustainability, durability, movement, image, sense of place, people places and management can be achieved through design and process. Within each principle a number of tangible elements have been identified which should be considered when instigating, designing or reviewing public realm projects. Collectively these principles and elements work together to create successful public places.

Over the following pages, a selection of case studies demonstrate best practice in each of the eight principles. These case studies are not ‘best in class’ but useful for learning. They do not necessarily demonstrate best practice for all the principles (as highlighted earlier, not all principles are appropriate and not every principle will be given the same emphasis). These case studies have been selected for their variety of project type and scale to illustrate how good design can be applied to all our region’s public space types, from coastal resort to industrial city.

Whilst many lessons can be learnt from some of the best Northwest examples, it is also important to look outside of the region for inspiration and benchmarking. A number of UK and International schemes showcase thought provoking approaches which should help stimulate creative thinking in the region.

The following case studies provide a brief analysis of best practice and key Learning Points that highlight practical ways that the key principle was achieved.

This document is intended to provide a general introduction to good practice in public realm design. Key Reading provides further sources of information. A full bibliography and project links are available online at:

www.RENEW.co.uk/placesmatter

“How effective public spaces are extremely difficult to accomplish, because their complexity is rarely understood. As William (Holly) Whyte said, “It’s hard to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.” How to Turn a Place Around, Project for Public Spaces, 2000

principles in practice
“Cities need hidden spaces and exposed spaces, rough spaces and smooth spaces, loud spaces and silent spaces – spaces where people remember, experience, contest, appropriate, get scared, make things, lose things, and generally become themselves.”
What are we scared of?, CABE Space 2005
A vibrant public realm is not just a result of quality design, but the way in which a space encourages, enhances and creates opportunities for activity. Think of the best public spaces you know and the chances are they will be places of activity, places to meet, sit, observe, attend local events and engage in social relationships.

The diversity of public life requires spaces that provide for everyone’s needs, spaces for intimate and communal activity, places to accommodate necessary, optional (recreational) and social activities. Spaces must be flexible and adaptable so as to accommodate the changing patterns of daily, weekly and seasonal use. They must also adapt in the longer term, traversing generations and continue to accommodate people’s changing needs. However, public realm design cannot generate such vibrancy alone. The edges of the space, the buildings and routes that surround the place, must work together to encourage mutually beneficial activity, injecting life into public realm.

**DIVERSITY**

‘Space for everyone’

- Public spaces are places for everyone so design needs to accommodate a range of users (of different ages, abilities and cultures) and a variety of uses from the private (meeting, waiting, sitting, watching) to the communal (markets, performances and events).
- Most importantly, the uses accommodated should be appropriate to the scheme - its location, scale and context.

**FLEXIBILITY**

‘Wasn’t there a market here last week?’

- Simple, uncluttered designs allow spaces to accommodate activities that are temporary, seasonal or time specific. Consider how the space adapts to these often quick and sometimes spontaneous changes in activity.
- Consider elements that have a dual purpose, for example, water features that can become platforms for performance, light columns that host Christmas lights or rigging for events, hidden power supplies and designated areas for street markets.
- Different people interpret public spaces in different ways. Spaces should be designed to allow for choice, play and experimentation in how they are used and experienced.

**ADAPTABILITY**

‘Here today, gone tomorrow’

- Simple design using high quality materials and a strong concept ensures the space retains its character when activity is absent.
- Robust, unprescriptive designs are key to creating a durable public realm that can adapt and respond to the rhythms and patterns of use by time of day, day of week and season.

**ACTIVE EDGES**

‘Think outside of the space’

- Activity is often generated by adjacent landuses. How does the space interact with its edges? Does it complement the buildings’ uses and encourage outside activity?
- Encourage dialogue with owners of adjacent properties and consider the management of activities associated with these uses to create better interaction between buildings and spaces. For example, consider allowing cafes and bars to spill out onto the space.

“First life, then spaces, then buildings – the other way around never works.”

Life Between Buildings, Jan Gehl, 1996

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**KEY READING**

The Councillor’s Guide to Urban Design
CABE [2003]

Life Between Buildings
Jan Gehl [1996]
PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: NOTTINGHAM
Completed: 2007
Client: NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
Design Team: GUSTAFSON PORTER, SPACE SYNTAX, ARUP, DAVIS LANGDON, SPEIRS & MAJOR
Planning Authority: NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
Funding Body: EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND, GREATER NOTTINGHAM PARTNERSHIP, EAST MIDLANDS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY & THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Contract value: £7.6M

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Old Market Square, at the heart of Nottingham’s town centre, has undergone a dramatic revitalisation. The once neglected and run down space plagued by anti-social behaviour and lacking character and function has been replaced by a new civic square, a destination with renewed vitality that has breathed life into the adjacent retail district and put the soul back into the city. The scheme, which comprises a new plaza and promenade, successfully accommodates diverse city activities through a simple, multi-functional and flexible design that provides access for all and a space for activities big and small.

USES DAY AND NIGHT
Complex level changes are replaced with a simple, open design with space for all activities, from meeting & resting to concerts & markets. The large water feature drains to become a stage for city scale events.

LEARNING POINTS
- Existing walls, steps & complex levels have been replaced with a simple, open plaza that accommodates complex pedestrian movements & diverse events. New lighting encourages the evening economy & the large water fountain, once drained, becomes a stage and seating area for events.
- The new design celebrates the square’s function as a major city transport hub, integrating the tram & bus networks & enhancing arrival points through lighting & furniture.
- Reconfiguration of bus routes to create a new raised terrace reactivates the square’s edge & creates a new place for café culture.
PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND
Completed: 2006
Client: EDINBURGH CITY CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMPANY
Design Team: GILLESPIES & GEHL ARCHITECTS
Planning Authority: THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
Funding Body: CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL & SCOTTISH ENTERPRISE EDINBURGH & LOTHIAN
Contract value: £2M

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Castle Street, the first of a series of Capital Streets projects, is the flagship urban space at the heart of Edinburgh’s historic centre. Whilst respecting the original street pattern and views to the Castle, the new design redefines the street, minimizing clutter to promote activity and improve the pedestrian experience. The street has become a new venue for markets and open-air entertainment, embracing a European café culture that has enhanced opportunities for local businesses and brings a village atmosphere to the historic street. The scheme showcases how public space can be used and enjoyed, animating the city centre and providing places to meet, sit, walk and linger.

LEARNING POINTS
- The removal of clutter, a simple street layout and defined zones of activity allows the street to accommodate any scale of event from open-air market to small street café.
- A shared surface reduces the dominance of the motor vehicle and gives greater space for accommodating larger events down the central spine (e.g. festivals, farmers markets, fairs).
- High quality paving, street furniture and lighting ensures the street retains its character when animation is absent.

FROM ROAD TO PLACE
The existing car dominated street (far left) now accommodates all uses from cycling to resting, walking to shopping through a simple street layout with clearly defined zones of activity (far right).
“We have a duty to ensure a diverse and thriving natural environment for it is essential to the economic, social and spiritual health and well being of this and future generations.”

Biodiversity Strategy for England, 2002
“Good quality design can encourage living and working patterns that mean less car use, reduced consumption of natural resources and increased biodiversity. This will be good news for future generations.”
Buildings and Spaces: Why Design Matters, CABE, 2005

In an age of heightened environmental awareness, how we approach green issues and use public realm to reduce our carbon footprint, address climate change and improve the natural environment is ever more important.

Whilst public realm design has implications for economic and social sustainability, it also offers opportunities to improve the natural environment and conserve and protect valuable resources. Sustainable interventions can be at any scale, from the use of recycled or locally sourced materials to the creation of a whole water management system.

In addition, there are many opportunities in our towns and cities to reverse the well documented decline in biodiversity. As well as contributing to the overall sustainability of a site, biodiverse landscapes improve our physical and psychological well being, offer opportunities for community involvement, help ameliorate climatic extremes, heavy rainfall and pollutants and provide cost effective, low maintenance solutions.

**BIODIVERSITY**

*’Valuable habitat for wildlife & people’*
- Improving ecological value in schemes of all scales, particularly in urban areas, should be encouraged. Existing areas of valuable biodiversity should be conserved and enhanced. Creating habitats benefits everyone, providing attractive and stimulating, wildlife-rich environments for adults and children to enjoy.
- Encourage learning and educational opportunities through interpretation boards and signage.
- Make the most of what is existing on site to create distinctive features. Most importantly keep it appropriate to local ecology.
- Where possible a hierarchy of green spaces should offer diversity of habitat. Consider site boundaries and how a scheme links into adjacent green areas.
- Use all available space. Green roofs, climbing plants and indigenous trees and plants can create habitats in the highest density urban areas. Areas of biodiversity do not have to be extensive, they can simply be the exchange of mown grass for long meadow grasses.
- Management should be dynamic and encourage varied opportunities for wildlife. A good quality, well-planned Biodiversity Management Plan is crucial for greenspaces.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SOUNDNESS**

*’Think green’*
- Consideration should be given to the future effects of climate change and the ability of our public realm to accommodate extreme weather conditions.
- Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) should be used where possible. A holistic SUDs system not only reduces surface water run-off and stormwater discharge rates, minimising flood risk; green roofs, swales and retention ponds also improve wildlife value and contribute to the amenity and aesthetics of public realm. The potential value of SUDs as an element of play and delight should not be underestimated.
- Renewable resources should be used where possible. Recycled and locally sourced, robust materials reduce environmental impact.
- Sustainable transport should be encouraged by providing good routes, links and facilities for cycling, walking and public transport use.

**KEY READING**

- Biodiversity Strategy for England
  England Biodiversity Group [2002]
- Making Contracts Work for Wildlife: How to Encourage Biodiversity in Urban Parks
  CABE Space [2006]
- The SUDs Manual
  Ciria [2007]
PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: PORTLAND, OREGON, USA
Completed: 2005
Client: CITY OF PORTLAND
Design Team: ATELIER DREISEITL & GREEN WORKS PC
Planning Authority: CITY OF PORTLAND
Funding Body: CITY OF PORTLAND
Contract value: £1.4m

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Tanner Springs Park is the newest greenspace in the former industrial Pearl District regeneration area. Once a natural wetland and bisected by Tanner Creek, the new urban park aims to reclaim and reinstate the wetland habitat that was lost to industry. The design, which includes naturalistic planting, seating terraces, floating pontoons and public art, aims to peel back the ‘urban skin’ and reveal the natural environment, providing a self contained, sustainable park that encourages biodiversity and improves local water management.

LEARNING POINTS
- Rainwater is collected from adjacent streets and cleansed through reedbeds in the central plaza. The natural collection and recycling process negates the need for expensive filtration and irrigation equipment and minimises the amount of water required from the city’s potable water system.
- The park aids SUDs and minimises impact upon local watercourses by acting as a retention pond during extreme stormwater events.
- Biodiversity is encouraged through the restoration of native wetland and meadow habitats and the use of local trees and coastal planting.
PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND
Completed: 2000
Client: CANMORE HOUSING ASSOCIATION
Design Team: HACKLAND + DORE, HARLEY HADDOW PARTNERSHIP, SUMMERS PARTNERS, RPS GROUP PLC
Planning Authority: CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
Funding Body: COMMUNITIES SCOTLAND
Contract value: £9.5m

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Slateford Green Estate, one of the first car-free ‘eco-villages’ in the UK, sets the precedent for sustainable living. The 120 unit mixed use development provides a range of ecologically sound social and private housing set around a series of public spaces and pedestrian only streets. The shared gardens, allotments, courtyards and play areas provide places for community interaction whilst managing local surface and storm water drainage and encouraging biodiversity. Strong pedestrian and cycle links, cycle facilities and a car share scheme encourages sustainable transport whilst thoughtful, user specific design, ensures spaces are accessible for all.

LEARNING POINTS
- Reed beds filter local surface and storm water providing natural cooling to the courtyards. Perimeter swales diffuse road run-off to the allotments.
- Diverse spaces and access for all encourage social cohesion providing opportunities to meet and socialise.
- Car free design with good cycle and pedestrian links promotes sustainable transport.
- Low-maintenance native species encourage biodiversity and provide wildlife habitats.
- Materials were sourced for minimal environmental impact, low maintenance, of proven technology and recyclability.

THE CAR FREE ‘ECO VILLAGE’
Car free living allows spaces between buildings to become havens for social interaction and play.

WATER MANAGEMENT
Sustainable Urban Drainage and native planting create exciting, educational play environments.
“Too often, the people who design and construct buildings and parks don’t worry about whether they will work properly or what they will cost to run. But the public has to live with badly designed buildings and spaces; and taxpayers often have to foot the bill for putting them right.”

The Cost of Bad Design, CABE, 2006
**ECONOMICS**

*Show me the money*

- Securing funding for the long-term management and maintenance of public spaces is essential. Inadequate sources of long-term revenue funding undermine the quality and value of public spaces and may not sustain the benefits of the initial investment.

- Traditional funding methods through Local Authority budgets and grant funding are often insufficient and unreliable. Alternative mechanisms of funding which provide more sustainable maintenance solutions should be sought. Opportunities to move management and maintenance away from Local Authorities and utilise private and voluntary contributions should be encouraged.

- Private funding of public realm maintenance through Business Improvement Districts and from developers through planning gain offer alternative solutions. As do improvement projects which are designed and delivered in a way which encourages shared responsibility and community ownership and management.

**MAINTENANCE**

*Future secured*

- Maintenance of public realm is essential to ensure long-term viability of schemes. Spaces should be managed and maintained in a responsive and effective manner to high standards. A clean environment free from damage, vandalism and litter looks cared for and therefore engenders respect.

- Designing out potential threats and nuisance and designing to help ease ongoing maintenance is essential at the outset to avoid unnecessary costs and damage.

- Local Authorities should have agreed standards and guidance on maintenance. Providing a maintenance manual with ‘as built’ drawings and keeping a stock of high quality materials ensures consistent, speedy repair.

**KEY READING**

- Paved with Gold: The Real Value of Good Street Design CABE Space [2007]
- Does Money Grow on Trees? CABE Space [2005]
- Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener ODPM [2002]
- Sustaining Green Space Investment Groundwork UK [2007]
PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: SHEFFIELD
Completed: 1998 - PRESENT
Client: SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL
Design Team: SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL, EDAW, FABER MAUNSELL, ALLIES & MORRISON & PUBLIC ARTISTS
Planning Authority: SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL
Funding Body: MILLENNIUM COMMISSION, SINGLE REGENERATION BUDGET, EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND
Contract value: £50M +

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
The city centre’s network of new and upgraded public spaces has been central to the economic and physical regeneration of Sheffield over the last decade. The Peace Gardens, Sheffield’s signature public space that originally catalysed the regeneration in 1998, has since been complemented by the Winter Gardens, Station Square, St Paul’s Place, Barker’s Pool and Howard Street link. A unique holistic approach to design and maintenance by the Local Authority has ensured that public realm is and has remained of the highest calibre.

MAINTAINING QUALITY
Designing for future maintenance minimises disruption and costs of key maintenance issues such as public utility access.

LEARNING POINTS
- Designs are closely guided by the City Centre Masterplan and Urban Design Compendium that outlines the vision for Sheffield’s regeneration.
- An in-house design team ensures a consistent palette of materials create a distinctive, unified character.
- A dedicated city centre Management Team provides an enhanced maintenance programme including 24 hour surveillance by Street Ambassadors. Maintenance is graded according to site importance giving spaces like the Peace Gardens a dedicated horticulturist. Ongoing communication between designers and grounds maintenance ensures standards are maintained.

COHERENT GOAL
A strong vision and co-ordinated approach ensures long-term survival of Sheffield’s public spaces.
**PROJECT SUMMARY**

Location: OLD TRAFORD, MANCHESTER

Completed: 2007

Client: TRAFFORD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Design Team: GROUNDWORK MANCHESTER, SALFORD & TRAFFORD

Planning Authority: TRAFFORD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Funding Body: SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES FUND, EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Contract value: £125,000

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Centenary Garden in Old Trafford was formerly a derelict and dangerous site adjacent to a school. The transformation demonstrates that neighbourhood public spaces can be exemplars of good design. The garden is both a recreational facility for local people and a learning environment for the school and includes a timber boardwalk, wildlife area, growing beds mini-amphitheatre and community art. Construction focused on the use of locally sourced sustainable materials. Regeneration of the site was led by local residents who are committed to leading ongoing maintenance with support from the local authority.

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**LEARNING POINTS**

- Working with all sectors of the local community including residents, the school and youth groups is crucial to success. Engendering community pride helps protect from vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

- Local residents agreed a rota for locking the garden at dusk and opening it in the morning. This allowed the designer to include components that are usually more susceptible to vandalism like timber and planting.

- A water source was essential for maintenance – but none existed. The designers installed a gravity-driven rainwater collection system to bring water from the school roof to a tap in the garden to provide a sustainable, low maintenance solution.

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**IT'S OUR SPACE**

Using ‘free play’ elements such as grassy slopes, boulders and ‘talk tubes’ reduces the need to replace expensive and restrictive traditional play equipment.

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**centenary garden**
Public realm is not just made up of squares, parks and spaces, but also the streets, footpaths and alleyways that link them. Much of the public realm is made up of these through routes that are often dominated by movement requirements. Designing in movement, providing connected, legible and ‘people friendly’ streets that encourage walking and cycling and meet the access needs of the whole community, is key to creating successful public realm.

The principles outlined in the Manual for Streets document provide important guidance on integrating movement of people. These principles can be applied to existing environments as well as new developments. They aim to encourage a more innovative and flexible site based approach to the design of streets, reducing traffic speed through design rather than enforcement and promoting a street user hierarchy approach that considers the movement needs of the whole community.

“Places and streets that have stood the test of time are those where traffic and other activities have been integrated successfully, and where buildings and spaces and the needs of the people, not just their vehicles, shape the area.”
Manual for Streets, Department for Transport, 2007
“Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets. If a city’s streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull.”

The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs, 1961

**MOVEMENT MANAGEMENT**

*Put people first*

- For too long, the focus of street design has been how to accommodate movement of the motor vehicle. This highway led approach has created towns and cities with car-dominated streetscapes. The most successful streets, however are those that integrate the car with other activities and accommodate all peoples’ movement needs.

- Streets should be designed with people in mind. Making the most of opportunities to refocus the street as a space, creating visual interest and amenity and encouraging social interaction should be embraced.

- The use of streets can be prioritised by following a couple of simple, good practice rules:
  - always give way to the more vulnerable in any condition of conflict, for example people on foot and on bicycles should be provided with safe, attractive routes;
  - and, give priority to the use which the local community agrees is the most important for that space. For example, in ‘Market Street’, the market function is the primary focus and other movement and uses should be seen as secondary supporting activities.

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**ACCESS FOR ALL**

*Sharing the public realm*

- The principles of inclusive design should be followed for all streets and spaces. They aim to provide a public realm where everyone is given the best opportunity to access all areas.

- It should be noted that it is sometimes not reasonable or desirable to make everywhere accessible to all, all of the time. Good design reflects the diversity of people who use it and offers choices where a single solution does not suffice. Streets and spaces are places to commune; never needing to ask the way or ask for help at times can create places that are anti-community and anti-social.

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**KEY READING**

- *Manual for Streets*  
  Department For Transport [2007]
- *Streets for All - North West*  
  English Heritage [2005]
- *Paving the Way: How we Achieve Clean, Safe and Attractive Streets*  
  CABE [2002]
- *Shared Space - Room for Everyone: A New Vision for Public Spaces*  
  Shared Space Organisation [2005]
- *Mental Speedbumps: The Smarter Way to Tame Traffic*  
  David Engwicht [2005]
- *New Life for Main Roads: Your Route to a Better High Street*  
  Transport 2000 [2004]
**PROJECT SUMMARY**

Location: NEWCASTLE  
Completed: 2004  
Client: NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL  
Design Team: GILLESPIES & COLIN BUCHANAN & PARTNERS  
Planning Authority: NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL  
Funding Body: SINGLE REGENERATION BUDGET, ONE NORTH EAST, ENGLISH HERITAGE, NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL  
Contract value: £7M

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Grainger Town, the historic heart of Newcastle, had fallen into decline in the early 1990s with traffic congestion, poor parking, low quality public realm and a lack of investment, all major issues for this struggling city quarter. Improving public realm was key to the regeneration of the area. In particular, the project strove to transform the walking experience, reconnect the area with the wider street network and create a high quality, pedestrian-priority precinct.

**LEARNING POINTS**

- The carriageway is given back to the pedestrian by providing shared surfaces and subtle street markings.
- Designated cycling routes are provided to link with the city wide network, and transport connections are well integrated with easy links to the Metro, bus and taxis.
- Minimal street clutter and a simple palette of natural materials creates an elegant, flexible composition responsive to the historical character of the street.
- Contrasting surfaces designate use, highlight hazards, encourage pedestrian activity and provide subtle but effective traffic calming.

**WELL CONNECTED**

Streetscape improvements form part of a wider network of co-ordinated projects.

**PEOPLE FIRST**

A shared carriageway gives pedestrians priority. Contrasting materials designate use & highlight hazards.

Images © Gillespies.
**PROJECT SUMMARY**

**Location:** DRACHTEN, NETHERLANDS

**Completed:** 2003

**Client:** MUNICIPALITY OF SMALLINGERLAND, FRIESLAND

**Design Team:** CASPAR SLIJPEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND MUNICIPALITY OF SMALLINGERLAND

**Planning Authority:** MUNICIPALITY OF SMALLINGERLAND

**Funding Body:** MUNICIPALITY OF SMALLINGERLAND

**Contract value:** £740,000

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Traffic management in Drachten, in the Friesland province of the Netherlands, sets a precedent for other market towns in Europe. In pursuit of reducing congestion, improving road safety and enhancing the social and economic vitality of the outer town, Smallingerland City Council implemented one of the first ‘shared space’ schemes. The former intersection, which carries almost 20,000 cars per day, now redesigned as a civic square, encourages a renewed vehicular-pedestrian relationship where eye contact between road users and pedestrians replaces traffic signals and a reclamation of the space slows traffic and revitalises the local area.

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**LEARNING POINTS**

- Traffic signals, signs, crossings and conventional highway elements were replaced with informal “courtesy crossings” for bicycles and pedestrians which aim to promote communication between drivers & vulnerable road users. Traffic must now approach the junction slowly and negotiate its way around.

- The existing intersection was reconfigured as a civic space revitalising adjacent businesses and encouraging active edges. Interactive water fountains that respond in height to traffic volumes and contrasting highway floor lighting emphasise the square as a whole, rather than just the central roundabout.

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**FROM INTERSECTION TO URBAN SQUARE**

Existing crossings & traffic signals have been removed & replaced with an urban square. People & vehicles now share space, respecting each others needs (right).

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Images © Municipality of Smallingerland.
“The best public realm schemes strive for the highest achievable quality. This does not always mean the most expensive solution but does simply an understanding of the principles of good design, a balancing of the sustainable over the quick fix, of quality over quantity, of innovation over the easy option.”

Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener, ODPM, 2002
"If we are prepared to take the risk, these are our rewards: the unpredicted, the alternative, surprising ways of living in cities"

What are we Scared of? The Value of Risk in Designing Public Space, CABE Space, 2005

BRANDING
'More here and less anywhere'

- Branding’ is not always about creating a new image, but about strengthening an existing identity. For example, a traditional materials palette can reinforce and enhance a heritage setting.

- Rebranding is often an essential ingredient for regeneration. For example, Birmingham, once known as the ‘concrete city’, underwent a radical public realm overhaul and rebranding exercise to encourage repopulation of the city centre and rejuvenate the evening economy.

- Changing the image of a place is not always about changing the view of the outside world, it can be as much about changing a community’s view of its self and encouraging self belief and confidence.

- Branding should fit into a wider area strategy to ensure consistency and a shared vision. Bespoke, place specific street furniture, signage, and lighting are an effective way to create a unique brand image.

DESIGN EXCELLENCE & INNOVATION
'Start taking some risks'

- Investing in quality design & materials is key to creating a positive image. Craftsmanship and detailing gives spaces their value and prestige.

- Risk should be managed but not eliminated. A strong overall design concept helps counteract pressures to avoid risk. ‘Good risks’ should be promoted as they provide stimulation, excitement and liberation. Imagine Piccadilly Gardens in Manchester without its interactive water fountains - an extraordinary place becomes very ordinary without an element of designed ‘risk’.

- Design competitions that employ the best multi-disciplinary teams help stimulate creativity and innovation. The value of public consultation as an arena for imagination should also not be overlooked.

- Looking outside of the Northwest and the United Kingdom to exemplar schemes raises aspirations and ambitions for the region’s towns and cities, encourages innovation and raises expected standards for the design of our public realm. Study tours with key stakeholders to best practice public spaces are an under used tool to educate and inspire our place leaders.

THE ‘WOW’ FACTOR
‘This space has ‘it’’

- The elusive ‘wow’ factor is not necessarily an ‘in your face’ statement. Many places with the ‘wow’ factor are more subtle in their creation. Creating impact is about the whole picture; the lighting, public art, interactive media, street furniture, surfacing, planting and more; everything that makes a place memorable and pleasurable.

- Water features, lighting and art installations all offer opportunities to create a ‘wow’ factor. It is imperative that these features are not just an add on but are integral to the overall design concept. This is particularly critical in the case of public art. Too many places rely on art to save a bad scheme or retrofit art pieces as an afterthought.

KEY READING
Living with Risk: Promoting Better Public Space Design
CABE Space [2007]

What are we Scared of? The Value of Risk in Designing Public Space
CABE Space [2005]

European Landscape Architecture: Best Practice in Detailing
Ian Thompson, Jens Balsby Nielsen, Torben Dam [2007]
PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: WORKINGTON, CUMBRIA
Completed: 2007
Client: ALLERDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Design Team: SIMON HITCHENS, ANDY PLANT, ALAN DAWSON ASSOCIATES, BASE, ILLUSTRIOUS COMPANY, MATT WAND, ALEXANDER BELESCHENKO, WORKING PARTS
Planning Authority: ALLERDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Funding Body: NORTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
Contract value: £2.74M

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
A series of new urban spaces and public art works are central to the regeneration of Workington town centre, reestablishing the town as a major shopping destination and acting as a catalyst for future growth in the area. Workington is a key example of a small town with big ambition, encouraging innovation and design excellence through public art to ‘rebrand’ the town and put it back on the proverbial map. Projects include ‘The Hub’ canopied outdoor performance space, with the first 3D sound system and unique ambient ‘soundscape’ composed specifically for the town, and ‘the Lookout’, a mechanical, interactive town clock.

LEARNING POINTS
- Public art is key to changing the town’s image. Innovation and creativity have been encouraged through international design competitions with strong political support for unique, original designs that push the boundaries. Taking risks and aiming high have helped Workington raise its profile and set itself above other larger towns in the region.
- High quality materials and bespoke street furniture sensitive to local history and provenance give the public realm ‘wow factor’. Craftsmanship and detail is fundamental to creating the highest calibre public realm and turning around a previously negative image.
PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: MANCHESTER
Completed: 2002
Client: MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Design Team: EDAW, ARUP & TADAO ANDO
Planning Authority: MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Funding Body: MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL, EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND, ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS, PRIVATE INVESTORS
Contract value: £12.5M

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester’s signature civic space, is located in the heart of the city’s hotel and retail district and en route to Piccadilly Station. The original Victorian sunken garden, which was revamped in the early 1960s, had become detached from its surroundings by the busy adjacent roads and tramway and was suffering from a lack of investment and care, becoming a neglected space and a focus for anti-social behaviour. The final landscape design, which was spurred by an international design competition, has helped change the face of Manchester city centre and created a lasting legacy for future generations.

LEARNING POINTS
- An international design competition attracted the best teams and most innovative solutions.
- The client recognised the benefit of investing in quality public realm. Generous funding allowed for the highest specification materials and use of high profile designers.
- Addressing key issues of useability, safety, security and the evening environment through radical intervention helped transform the image of the gardens.
- A simple design, using high quality, robust, well detailed materials and bespoke street furniture rebranded Piccadilly Gardens as a signature space, a destination and an iconic landmark of the city.

FROM TRAFFIC ISLAND TO ICONIC SPACE
The gardens today (far right), a far cry from the neglected and tired park of the 1990s (far left). Reconfigured movement and traffic circulation, better integration with surrounding buildings, innovative design and lighting have transformed Piccadilly Gardens’ image.
“Fight for authenticity and integrity...Value the common place. Our cultural landscapes are our ordinary history and everyday nature intertwined...Let the character of the people and the place express itself... Don’t fossilise places.”

Sue Clifford, Common Ground, Start with the Park, CABE Space, 2005
In a world of global brands, chainstores and the ‘clone town’ high street, the design of public realm has an increasingly important role to play in creating places that are more different and less anywhere.

When asked to name our favourite or most memorable places, we often unconsciously think about those locations that have meaning, a strong identity and that we have emotional attachment to. When moving through our towns and cities, we often recognise the notion of ‘arriving’ and ‘leaving’ but we cannot always put our finger on why.

Creating a sense of place is the process of identifying and enhancing this unique DNA of ‘place’; the character, culture and heritage of an area. It is about creating spaces that celebrate individuality, that encourage people and activities and that provide us with distinct experiences as we move through public realm. These are the places that we cherish, remember and want to revisit.

**LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS**

*Understanding the place*

- Identify the site’s unique historical, geographical, cultural and social context. This is what gives the place identity. Emphasising these elements with integrity and honesty is what fosters a ‘sense of place’.

- Local distinctiveness can be emphasised in any number of ways. Perhaps surfaces and street furniture are made from local materials or in traditional crafts, the site history is metaphorically reflected through lighting, art and water, and planting may make reference to local ecology.

- A site may have an existing character which could be retained and enhanced. This is particularly relevant in historical or culturally sensitive places or, it may require a new ‘sense of place’ - an imposed identity to redefine and turnaround a place with a poor image. For example, this may be the case with a new neighbourhood in a previously derelict area.

- Public art is a key mechanism for creating a ‘sense of place’, providing a vehicle for statements about a site’s historical, geographical and social identity. Involving people in its creation gives the artwork integrity. However, public art on its own will not save a poorly designed space, it should be integral to the overall design concept.

**EXPERIENTIAL**

*A sensory narrative*

- A landscape with sense of place is one where we feel ‘arrival’ and ‘departure’ and definite experiences in between.

- Creating rich, stimulating environments requires consideration of all of our senses. Designers often do not fully utilise texture, scent, sound, lighting and colour to help define places and transitions.

- Planting, materials, furniture, paving, public art and lighting are all important ingredients for successful place creation. They should be used together to create readable narratives that encourage animation and distinctive uses.

**KEY READING**

*By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice*
DETR & CABE [2000]

*Better Civic Buildings and Spaces*
CABE [2002]

*Experiential Landscape*
Kevin Thwaites & Ian Simkins [2006]
**PROJECT SUMMARY**

Location: COVENTRY CITY CENTRE  
Completed: 2002  
Client: COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL  
Design Team: MACCORMAC JAMIESON PRICHARD (MJP) & RUMMEY DESIGN  
Planning Authority: COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL  
Funding Body: THE MILLENNIUM COMMISSION, COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL, ADVANTAGE WEST MIDLANDS, HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND, EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND, THE HENRY MOORE FOUNDATION, PRIVATE DEVELOPERS  
Contract value: £55m

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

A series of five linked public spaces - Priory Garden, Priory Cloister, Priory Place, Millennium Place and the Garden of International Friendship - collectively make up Coventry's Phoenix Initiative. The public realm initiative, designed to catalyse future development, has been key to the regeneration of the city centre. The award winning £55m redevelopment scheme, takes the visitor on a journey through time, spanning 1,000 years of the city's history. Public art is integral to the scheme, creating a strong sense of place and interpreting the consistent design concept of time, reconciliation and memory. The result is a rich experience that has had a regenerative effect on the city centre.

**LEARNING POINTS**

- Character and identity is created or enhanced by site specific context, making reference to the ancient topography, Coventry's rich history and local people.  
- Public art is integral to the scheme, carefully designed in at inception rather than added later as an afterthought.  
- Complex changes in level, the integration of public art, architecture and hard and soft landscaping of different scales and character work together to create contrasting spaces, each with a sense of place and combining to produce a rich experiential journey through the city centre.  
- A dynamic lighting scheme emphasises a sense of place after dark.

**LANDSCAPE AS NARRATIVE**

A strong concept of the spatial, temporal journey is interpreted through design, art and lighting.

**LOCALY DISTINCTIVE**

Respecting and enhancing local identity, site history and context, the archaeological remains of the Priory create a strong sense of place.
A NEW PLACE
Defining sense of place from a blank canvas requires a bold, strong approach such as these highly distinctive light columns, surfaces and tree grilles.

old mill street

PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: NEW ISLINGTON, MANCHESTER
Completed: 2005
Client: URBAN SPLASH, MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL, ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS
Design Team: MARTIN STOCKLEY ASSOCIATES & GRANT ASSOCIATES
Planning Authority: MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Funding Body: ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS
Contract value: £2m

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
The New Islington Millennium Community is a £250m development on the site of the former Cardroom Estate in East Manchester. Old Mill Street is the first major public realm infrastructure for the 29 acre site connecting the proposed cutting-edge architecture, waterways and greenspaces and set to become the location for the future community market street. The street, which has been widened, realigned and traffic calmed, sets the character and sense of place for the new vision, which aims to transform the previously neglected and rundown estate and a create unique, contemporary community for the Millennium.

LEARNING POINTS
- The street’s bold new look begins the transformation of the area, from ‘no-go’ zone to new city neighbourhood. A strong sense of place is created by making reference to the site’s historical and natural context. Artwork on cast iron polka dots is inspired by native aquatic planting found in local canals and corten steel light columns reflect the area’s manufacturing history.

- A rich, textural streetscape is created through natural materials (steel, clay brick and green oak) that mature over time. Contrasting scales, small paving units and monolithic light columns, create a human scale environment.

“Old Mill Street looks unlike any street anywhere in Manchester, in the UK, or even the world - it’s fantastic and starts to show the spirit of New Islington.”
Nick Johnson Director, Urban Splash
Public spaces play an important role, as places for social interaction, social mixing and social inclusion. The secret to creating ‘people places’ is to engage the community, design for all and design with safety and security in mind without stripping our environments of character, pleasure and risk.

Community engagement rekindles interest in public realm, promotes shared responsibility and inclusivity and ensures that designs are in line with local aspirations. The increased sense of ownership that this brings increases levels of self-policing that reduce levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour and ensure the long-term survival of our streets, parks and spaces.

“[the public space improvements] have changed the way people treat the area, there is no fly tipping and burnt out cars, as there used to be. Everybody is talking a greater responsibility for the area, and treating it as if it is theirs, as it should be.”

Resident, Halton [on Neighbourhood Pride, an estate-focused environmental regeneration scheme]
“The success of a particular public space is not solely in the hands of the architect, urban designer or town planner; it relies also on people adopting, using and managing the space – people make places, more than places make people.”
Social Value of Public Space, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007

**Secure by Design**

*‘Is it safe?’*

*Investing in good design and management is proven to reduce crime and vandalism. Natural surveillance and eyes on the street with spaces overlooked and entrances and exits well defined, good lighting and permeable routes help improve the perception of safety in our public spaces. Avoiding negative edges, encouraging activity, particularly evening use and providing well looked after spaces which give the impression of care helps discourage abuse of our parks, streets and spaces.*

*Public/private partnerships and an integrated approach to planning out crime has significant impact on the future success of public spaces. Effective working between developers, designers, the Police Architectural Liaison Service and the Local Authority resolves conflicts between security and other objectives at the earliest stages and ensures that, by designing out crime, we do not inadvertently design out people or lose the character of the amenity.*

*In the long term, strong management regimes and co-ordinated services between police, town wardens, CCTV and maintenance teams ensures quick, effective crime resolution.*

**Inclusivity**

*‘Design for everyone’*

*Designs should accommodate the needs of all users across genders, abilities and ethnicities.*

*It is important to recognise the so-called marginal or ‘problem’ groups who may be considered undesirable but who have equal rights to use our public spaces. Removing them from our streets and parks will not resolve the issue. Finding ways to accommodate everyone is a challenge designers need to rise to.*

*Creating an inclusive public realm that is accessible to all, enables everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities. Meeting access needs should be at the forefront of design decisions, using creative and lateral thinking to provide innovative spaces that can accommodate real people in all their diversity.*

**Engagement**

*‘It’s our space’*

*The consultation process should be inclusive, collating information from the public, local community, visitors, key stakeholders, local businesses and potential partners. Marginal groups such as the elderly, youths, children and the disabled should be given an equal opportunity to contribute.*

*The community should be consulted at all stages of the project. A programme of regular events ensures avenues for communication, feedback and input are available throughout project development.*

*Community led public art provides an ideal medium for involvement. Participatory art promotes local talent, creates pride and respect, raises aspirations and gives a means of sharing the narrative of local life.*

**Key Reading**

*It’s Our Space: A Guide for Community Groups Working to Improve Public Space CABE [2007]*

*The Principles of Inclusive Design. (They Include You.) CABE [2006]*

*The Social Value of Public Spaces Joseph Rowntree Foundation [2007]*

*Decent Parks? Decent Behaviour? CABE Space [2005]*

SECURE BY DESIGN
Passive surveillance from overlooking properties, well defined entrances, permeable edges and routes with clear sight lines improve the perception of safety in the park.

PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: MANCHESTER
Completed: 2000
Client: HULME REGENERATION LTD
Design Team: LANDSCAPE PROJECTS, IAN SIMPSON ARCHITECTS, SIMON FENTON PARTNERSHIP
Planning Authority: MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Funding Body: MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL, CITY CHALLENGE, BELLWAYS HOUSING
Contract value: £3m

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Hulme Park extends across 4 hectares and links Manchester city centre with the heart of Hulme, a formerly run-down residential district, notorious for crime and anti-social behaviour. The Park is a safe, inclusive and well-used greenspace, which provides themed gardens, sports facilities, play areas and performance space for local residents. The park design, developed through public consultation, uses thoughtful solutions to resolve issues of crime and vandalism. The clear design principles maximise activities in the park and reconnect the area to the city. The park and public space enhancements have had clear fiscal benefits, attracting new people to the area and boosting local house prices by 7-15%.

LEARNING POINTS
- Public consultation fosters a sense of pride and ownership which discourages anti-social behaviour.
- The park is not secured; instead natural surveillance is used to reduce crime and the fear of crime. Park facilities are located next to existing facilities, close to busy through routes where they can be overlooked from streets and neighbouring houses.
- Entrances are well marked by buildings, lighting, signage and street furniture. Clearly defined routes with open views from surrounding streets and permeable boundaries encourage use and inclusiveness.
- A combination of bollards, railings, trenches and grilles discourage misuse by car drivers and dog owners.
PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: CASTLEFORD
Completed: 2006
Client: WAKEFIELD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL
Design Team: HUDSON ARCHITECTS & PIERRE VIVANT
Planning Authority: WAKEFIELD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL
Funding Body: WAKEFIELD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL, YORKSHIRE FORWARD, NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL FUND
Contract value: £1.1m

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Henry Moore Square is just one of eleven schemes that make up the Castleford Project, a unique collaboration between Wakefield Council, Channel 4, key regeneration agencies and the local community to develop a group of improvement projects for the former West Yorkshire mining town. The town square is a key example of a grassroots initiative instigated, sustained and driven by community involvement that demonstrates successful and innovative partnership working. The project is testament to Wakefield Council’s commitment to inclusive, community focused design. So far, the Castleford Project has been credited with leveraging over £200m of new investment into the town.

LEARNING POINTS
- Local people set the agenda for change, identifying the town square as a priority for improving Castleford. Taking part at all stages of the design process empowered the local community and will ensure the long-term success of the schemes.
- Involvement of high profile designers instilled a sense of pride in the local community and demonstrated that cutting edge design is not just for our major cities.
- Regular local meetings, an online community forum and large scale consultation exercises run by local council members ensure community ownership. A group of selected community champions headed up local residents groups who consulted and voted on each project.
Commitment, collaboration and communication are the three key elements that drive a project forward and ensure the creation and continuation of successful public realm. A holistic, co-ordinated approach that promotes collaborative working to a shared vision encourages innovation, positive challenging of convention and an enhanced sense of responsibility. A clear client brief, multi-disciplinary team working and design competitions further ensure our towns and cities demonstrate the best examples of public realm. Many of the most successful public realm schemes have a project champion at the helm, driving innovation and providing sustained political support.

Effective management of public realm is not just an issue of funding, it is equally about the skills deployed, the way in which regulations are used and the way in which the design process is managed. A key element of this is employing a clear management plan which can adapt to changing needs.

“At Urban Splash we pay as much attention to the detail and design of our communal and public spaces in our buildings as we do to the detail of the apartments. It’s essential to us that public spaces are designed and maintained to the same high standards as the buildings themselves if we are to create successful, new, life long, communities.”

Nick Johnson, Deputy Chief Executive, Urban Splash
BUY-IN

‘One vision’

- Successful public realm schemes are generated from a holistic, co-ordinated approach and the establishment of strong mutually beneficial partnerships. Collaborative working and co-ordinated decision making from the client, design team and stakeholders ensure positive, integrated working.

- Commitment to a quality outcome is essential and having a strong vision with aspirational aims encourages innovation and high standards.

- Outside sourcing of design teams should be encouraged, as should design competitions that will attract the best designers and the most creative solutions. Highly skilled, multi-disciplinary teams enthuse and encourage buy-in from stakeholders.

- Clients should invest time in a clear, focused and aspirational brief to ensure commitment of the design team, community and stakeholders to work to a shared vision.

CONFIDENCE

‘Maintaining quality’

- A Management Plan with a clear focus is an essential component of any public realm scheme and should outline short, medium and long-term maintenance of such services as street cleansing, landscaping, highways and public utilities. Regular monitoring and review ensures that management policies evolve with the scheme as it matures and responds to changes in how people use it. A successful design will pre-empt these unpredictable factors, and give consideration to the levels of resources and skills required to maintain its quality and value.

- Improving communication and involving a management team in the design ensures potential issues are resolved from the outset.

- Where specialist expertise is lacking, pooling resources with neighbouring authorities or employing consultants should be encouraged. Local Authorities should not be afraid to employ specialist assistance to ensure quality upkeep. For example, bespoke street furniture, water fountains and specialist lighting may be better managed and maintained by outside companies.

- Poor surface reinstatements by utility companies are the blight of our public realm. Managing the impact of work undertaken by utility companies who benefit from permitted development rights are a significant problem for Local Authorities. It is essential for planning authorities, highway authorities and utility companies to work together to agree a commitment to sensitive, high quality reinstatement.

- Partnership working, particularly with the local police force, community and businesses should be encouraged.

PROJECT CHAMPION

‘Follow the leader’

- Project champions have the ability and commitment to advocate for the project in order to mitigate delay, safeguard resources and provide continued clarity on the purpose and aspirations of the project.

“...The best place-making is usually the result of determined civic leadership, combined with effective public involvement and a high level of professional skill.”

Start with the Park, CABE, 2005

KEY READING

Local Leadership for Better Public Places
CABE [2004]

Living Places: Caring for Quality
ODPM [2004]
george st quarter

LIGHTING THE WAY
The Council embraced 3D technology to make a case for innovative lighting that would deliver their vision and commitment to creating a strong night time economy.

PROJECT SUMMARY
Location: ST HELENS
Completed: 2004
Client: ST HELENS METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
Design Team: TAYLOR YOUNG, ST HELENS COUNCIL, BIRSE CIVILS LTD
Planning Authority: ST HELENS MBC
Funding Body: EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND, SINGLE REGENERATION BUDGET, NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL FUND, HERITAGE ECONOMIC REGENERATION SCHEME, NORTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
Contract value: £2.1M

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
The redevelopment of the George Street Quarter utilised European best practice and a non-standard approach to leadership and team dynamics to create an outstanding public realm which has had a catalytic role in the wider transformation of St Helens. The previously neglected area now boasts high quality streetscapes and highways, enhanced signage, public art and greenspaces. Confidence, ambition and focus on quality were key principles championed by the client. Strong leadership and an empowered multi-disciplinary team working in close partnership with the Local Authority, contractor, public and private sector ensured ownership and a successful project delivery.

LEARNING POINTS
- An appointed project champion, strong client leadership and an empowered multi-disciplinary steering group drove the project forward.
- A multi-disciplinary design team worked in partnership with contractors from the earliest stages. The team demonstrated commitment, determination and self belief, setting an aspiration for high quality from the start. An integrated approach with co-ordinated decision making maintained design quality and ownership from conception to handover and beyond.
- The scheme was driven by public aspirations and followed a clear vision plan which recognised the strategic context. Close community and business consultation ensured local buy-in.
**PROJECT SUMMARY**

**Location:** KENSINGTON, LONDON

**Completed:** 2003

**Client:** ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

**Design Team:** PROJECT CENTRE LTD

**Planning Authority:** ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

**Funding Body:** ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON & CHELSEA, TRANSPORT FOR LONDON, TTS TRAFFIC SIGNAL IMPLEMENTATION

**Contract value:** £5M

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Kensington High Street’s radical approach to street design demonstrates how accepted conventions can be challenged in pursuit of good design. The scheme, which drew on innovative Dutch shared space principles, reduces the dominance of the motor vehicle by encouraging a ‘self-help’ attitude to street safety. The success of the scheme has been largely attributed to the forward thinking Councillor Daniel Moylan who championed this new approach and led the progressive multi-disciplinary team, gaining support for the proposals in light of initial reluctance and fear of liability. Strong leadership, sustained will and team buy-in and commitment ensured the scheme’s success.

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**LEARNING POINTS**

- High level and visible political leadership was essential to successful project delivery. Councillor Moylan, supported by local Council Members and Borough Officers, enabled the team to depart from standard safety norms in pursuit of design excellence.

- Co-ordinated and balanced decision making to an aspirational brief drove the project forward. A sound evidence base of research and detailed monitoring and phasing of works were used to inform and support the decision to proceed with the unconventional approach to road safety.

- The improvements show what can be achieved with the vision and will to push the boundaries of accepted practice.

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**TAking the Risk**

Removing conventional traffic safety furniture in favour of a ‘self-help’ attitude to street safety required strong leadership and unfaltering commitment to innovation. Since implementation, an overall reduction in accidents by 43% demonstrates the success of pushing boundaries of risk to create better design.
“Everyone who makes policy, shapes opinions, sets budgets, selects designers, writes briefs or assesses proposals can play a part in raising standards.”


**SO WHAT NEXT?**


Delivered with and through partner organisations including CABE, NWDA and RIBA North West, Places Matter! will drive up the quality of the built environment in the Northwest by facilitating improved decision making and commissioning skills, as well as increasing the awareness of and expectations for high quality design amongst clients and developers.

The dissemination and implementation of this document will be supported through a range of Places Matter! activities during the coming months. Details of these will be published on:

[www.RENEW.co.uk/placesmatter](http://www.RENEW.co.uk/placesmatter)
PICTURE CREDITS

2 Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester  Project Designer: EDAW  Image © EDAW. Photograph by Dixi Carillo.
4 Whitehaven Harbour  Project Designer: BDP  Image © Jonty Wilde
6 Nyhavn, Copenhagen  Project Designer: City of Copenhagen
8 Whitby Park, Ellesmere Port  Project Designer: Gillespies

12 Keswick Town Centre  Project Designer: Cumbria County Council & Capita
14 Warrington Town Centre  Project Designer: Landscape Design Associates
16 Exchange Square, Manchester  Project Designer: Martha Schwartz Inc
20 Tanner Springs Park, Portland, Oregon, USA  Project Designer: Atelier Dreiseitl & Greenworks PC  Image © Atelier Dreiseitl
24 Old Hall Street, Liverpool  Project Designer: BCA Landscape
28 Barrow-in-Furness Town Centre Urban Design Framework  Project Designer: Gillespies
32 Williamson Square, Liverpool  Project Designer: Camlin Lonsdale  Image © Ian Lawson for the NWDA
36 Municipal Square, Crewe  Project Designer: Gillespies
40 Darlington Town Centre  Project Designer: Gillespies
44 Sheaf Square, Sheffield  Project Designer: Sheffield City Council & EDAW
48 Southern Gateway: South Beach, Blackpool  Project Designer: EDAW & DPA Lighting  Image © ReBlackpool

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KEY WEB LINKS

For further information on careers in the built environment, getting involved in the public realm, or relevant publications and research outlined in this handbook, visit: www.cabe.org.uk  www.landscapeinstitute.org  www.architecture.com
the public realm puzzle

- tear out puzzle page
- place paper picture side down
- fold corners (1) into the centre point to form a diamond

- flip the paper back over (picture side up)
- fold corners (2) into the centre to form a small square

- fold square in half
- put fingers in each of four square flaps
- public realm puzzle complete!