

8.0 Public Art

STATEMENT

8.1 Introduction

It is intended that this chapter will provide a framework for negotiations with developers to secure the provision of public art as part of new developments in Vale Royal and contribute to the implementation of the Arts Strategy for Vale Royal and The Community Plan for Vale Royal.

8.2 What is Public Art?

Public art is the commissioning of artists and craftspeople to make new site specific work that can be permanent, temporary, internal or external. It can also involve artists' unique creative abilities in the development and design of new spaces and regeneration schemes. Public art includes work that is integrated into a development, from street furniture, lighting, brickwork and landscaping designs to internal details of a building, its furniture, flooring, ceramics and textiles. It can also be sculpture, photography, performance, moving image and events. Public art need not be within public spaces, but has to be accessible to the public realm, or available in the semi-public areas of completed developments.

Public art is not an artform but a principle. It is a principle of improving the changing environment through the arts and is a term given to the practice of involving artists in the conception, development and transformation of public space. It is specifically commissioned for a known site and its audience is the public or community who occupy that space.

Developers and their agents are strongly encouraged to discuss proposals with the Arts Development Officer at the earliest possible opportunity in the development process. The Council's policy is to encourage involvement of artists at the earliest stages of development of new architectural, landscape and environmental schemes, so that their work is integral to the planning, development and realisation of that scheme, rather than added on at the end of the process. The Council's Officer would also wish to advise on the commissioning process and act in an advisory role where developers wish to provide their own public art.

8.3 What are the benefits of public art?

The Council considers that public art has an important role in promoting regeneration and can also:

- Contribute to local distinctiveness
- Create a stimulating environment to live, work, invest or visit
- Enhance important public spaces
- Help to integrate new development within the existing built fabric
- Involve the community directly in new developments, creating a sense of local pride and ownership

Public art helps to foster a sense of place, making it memorable, and provides useful landmarks. Public art can take many forms and the Borough Council has a relatively open mind on what may be appropriate. The Council takes the view that cultural development, desirable in its own right, can also help to achieve Council objectives of improving the economy, the environment and the quality of life. Councils are increasingly moving from providing arts and cultural services to acting as facilitators and enablers.

8.4 Arts Strategy For Vale Royal – 2004 - 2009

The strategic objectives of the Arts Strategy are as follows:

- Arts activities will strengthen community life in Vale Royal and promote social inclusion;
- Arts activities will support regeneration, economic development and future growth;
- The arts will add to the quality of the natural and built environment and will help create a safer and more sustainable environment.

A further objective with the Arts Strategy is for the arts to make a major contribution to improve the environment. The Strategy identifies that:

- Arts projects and events support community life and involvement in villages and towns, and make communities more sustainable through helping people to feel good about where they live;
- A more strategic approach to public art could add quality and distinctiveness both to the urban environment and to countryside sites;
- Amongst the Borough's assets are the countryside sites and trails. The arts play an important part in helping with their interpretation and in finding ways of channelling community involvement.

Key objectives within the Arts Strategy are to strengthen the Borough Council's guidelines for public art through supplementary planning documents. The Strategy also advocates the role of public art in enhancing the design quality of new urban developments, especially town centres and in improving the aesthetic quality of sensitive locations which have major impact, especially town gateways and key public realm areas.

8.5 The Requirement

The Council will prefer developers to include public art within their developments, but in appropriate circumstances may agree to accept contributions to off-site art works.

The Borough Council considers 1% of construction costs as an appropriate contribution to public art.

The Council does not have a policy to work with local artists, but where it is appropriate to employ a local artist and/or support local creative industries, this would add to the economic development of the Borough.

The requirement set out above is a minimum requirement, however, the extent and value of the contribution will vary from project to project and is decided through negotiations with the developer. Factors affecting the size of the contribution include:

- Location, size and type of the development.

- Whether the art is an integral part of the building structure/s or in another public space nearby.
- Ongoing maintenance costs and responsibilities.

It will be a requirement that as negotiated with the local authority, every housing and commercial development incorporates public art into the fabric of the infrastructure and landscaping. Housing developments providing on-site open space facilities will have opportunities to include public art features within these open spaces, for example through furniture, paving, lighting, entrance and signage design, often at no or limited increased cost. Similarly, gates, entrances and quality detail design and material specification of many features offer opportunities within buildings and hard landscaping to incorporate additional public art features. It may, on occasion be more appropriate for a developer to make an off-site contribution instead of provide specific on-site pieces. This contribution may be pooled towards more substantial schemes or initiatives. Smaller developments should aim for an appropriate uplift over normal construction/finishing costs to incorporate artistic elements in the scheme. However, developers of major schemes will be expected to set aside a proportion of their budget to commission works of art that are fully accessible, for the benefit of the community and which make a significant contribution to the appearance of the scheme or the character of the area.

8.6 Housing Developments of 10 or more dwellings and Large Commercial Developments

For larger developments¹ of 10 or more dwellings or large commercial developments*, developers will be required to extend the provision of public art to include commissioned work specifically for the site, recognising both its physical environment and to the needs and desires of those who use it. The artist of a commissioned work may involve members of the community in the creation of a piece of art through consultation and community involvement, and thereby encourage their sense of ownership and appreciation of the work. It may, on occasion be more appropriate for a developer to make an off-site contribution instead of provide specific on-site pieces. This contribution may be pooled towards more substantial schemes or initiatives.

8.7 Northwich Vision

A range of public realm projects are proposed as part of the Northwich Regeneration Framework. A hierarchy of improvements is proposed which includes commissioning bespoke public art features which reinforce the sense of place and identity of the town centre. An Interim Planning Guidance document for the Northwich Vision area was approved in February 2004 (<http://www.northwichvision.org/Northwich%20Vision%20IPG.pdf>) which details the Public Realm Strategy for the Northwich Vision. On each development scheme brought forward within the town centre, a levy of 5% development

¹ * The term larger scale developments relates to the categories of development given in paragraph 7 of Article 8 of The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure Order) 1995. It includes:

- Sites for 10 or more dwellings or proposed residential development sites of 0.5hectares or more where a number of dwellings is not known.
- New buildings providing a floorspace of 1000 square metres or more; and
- development carried out on a site of 1 hectare or more.

costs will be placed on the development scheme and drawn against the development scheme as a S106 agreement. The monies received through this process will be placed in a 'common fund', managed by the Borough Council, which will be utilised to implement the key schemes within the infrastructure and public realm framework. Please also refer to Topic Paper 5 (Northwich Vision) of this document for more details of the requirements for sites within and adjacent to Northwich Vision.

8.8 Contact

Katherine West
Arts Development Officer
Leisure and Cultural Services
Vale Royal Borough Council
Wyvern House
The Drummer
Winsford
Cheshire
01606 867522