

A Public Realm Vision for the City

PLAZAS QUAREMARKETLANEPAS SAGERIVERWALKWAY COURTY ARD WALKWAY POCKETPARK CHURCHY ARDLANEY ARDALLEY RIVERLANE CLOSEALLEY STREETMARKETPAS SAGES QUAREY ARD MARKETCLOS E PLAZACHURCHY ARD COURTRIVERCLOSEROOFTERRACEALLEY LANE CHURCHY ARD STREETS QUARELANEALLEY Y ARD CHURCHY ARD PLAZAPOCKETPARKSTREETMARKETPLAZAGARDENS QUAREWALKWAY LANE



Stage 1 Executive summary

Version 1.4

Date: 25th June 2021

Prepared by:

growthIndustry www.growthindustry.co.uk

Contents

Introduction	3
Literature review summary	4
Key themes influencing public realm in the City	7
Best practice and comparator cities	9
Mapping	11
Key challenges and finding the right balance	13
Consultation workshop summaries	15
Outline Brief for Stage 2 Public Realm Vision	16

Introduction

This summary report has been prepared by Growth Industry landscape architects, who were commissioned in March 2021 to undertake an initial Stage 1 assessment and strategic response to the proposal to develop a public realm vision for the City.

In order to refine an outline brief for the public realm vision, this initial Stage 1 review has considered the many varied and great urban spaces that currently exist and contribute to the rich and unique sense of place that defines the City of London. It has also explored the process of creating places required to deliver and extend the legacy of great City spaces. The challenges such spaces currently face have been explored as well as the opportunities which both existing and new places can offer to an evolving city in a changing climate.

Ultimately it is the intention that the future public realm vision will set out how tangible, design-led outputs, as transformative moves and key projects, can guide, shape and deliver successful places within the streets and spaces of the City. It is envisaged that the vision will be presented as a design-led visual document envisioning a series of future scenarios for the City's places, made up of its streets, spaces, lanes, courts and alleyways - scenarios intended to anticipate, provoke, and to lead in the face of a rapidly changing City on the world stage.

Following review of a range of key strategic documents affecting the City's development in the short term (Covid recovery, Culture and Commerce) and medium to long term (City Vision 2036, Climate action strategy, Transport strategy), it is clear that there is great expectation placed upon the public realm of the city to assist and in some cases lead on delivering the required levels of change. Realising many of the ambitious targets set out in the various plans will undoubtedly have an impact on the spaces and places offered within the City for the practical day to day use and social enjoyment of its many users.

The Stage 1 process has involved the following workstreams summarised within this brief report:

- An extensive literature review of key corporate documents, to produce a summmary of their collective impacts on public realm design and influence over the making of places.
- The identification of a series of overarching themes, distilling corporate goals and polices, that may inform the final vision.
- A consideration of the existing spatial typologies that exist within the City and an exploration of the pressures and conflicts that impact public realm design.
- A series of internal consultation workshops in order to test scenarios of future places, review potential conflicts and opportunities and refine vision objectives and opportunities.
- Prepare a summary outline brief outlining the scope for the public realm vision for the City.

Literature Review

A number of relevant strategic documents affecting public realm have been reviewed in order to distill those goals and ambitions that may affect the use of the City's public realm going forward - ultimately affecting the quality and sense of place and placemaking within the City.

Stage 1 Strategic documents reviewed:

City Plan 2036 Shaping the Future City, City of London Local Plan

Climate Actions Strategy 2020-2027, City of London Corporation

The Square Mile: Future City, April 2021, City of London Corporation/Oliver Wyman

Culture and Commerce: Fuelling Creative Renewal, Culture and Commerce Taskforce

Transport Strategy: City Streets: Transport for a changing Square Mile, May 2019, City of London **London Recharged - Our Vision for 2025** February 2021, City of London Corporation/Oliver Wyman/ARUP

Tackling Racism Taskforce, January 2021

City Streets: Transportation response to support Covid-19 recovery (Phase 1 and 2)

Key Policy Documents:

City Public Realm: People, Places, Projects, July 2016

Air Quality Strategy 2019-2024

Tree Strategy, May 2012

Cultural Strategy 2018-2022

Open Space Strategy, 2015

Cool Streets and Greening, February 2021

Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026 (draft), March 2021

Churchyard Enhancement Programme

Urban Greening Factor Study, City of London Corporation, July 2018

Thermal Comfort Guidelines for developments in the City of London, City of London, Dec 2020

Wind effects and tall buildings, City of London Corporation, July 2017

The City as a Place for People, City of London Corporation and CPA, March 2018

London-wide relevant documents

Healthy Streets for London, TfL, February 2017

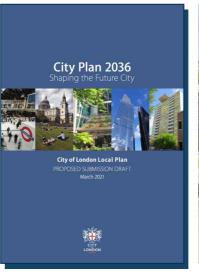
Public London Charter, Draft October 2020, GLA

A City for all Londoners, Mayor of London, GLA, 2016

Covid 19 and the recovery of life at night, Mayor of London, GLA, December 2020

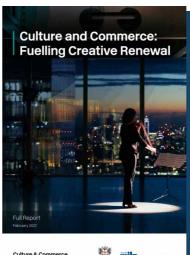
Smarter London Together, Mayor of London, GLA, 2018

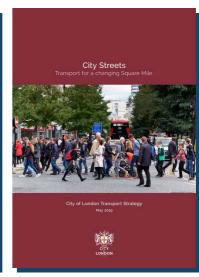
Urban Greening for Biodiversity Net Gain: A design Guide, Mayor of London / London Wildlife Trust, March 2021 Green Capital: Green Infrastructure for a future city, Mayor of London / Cross River Partnership / Natural England







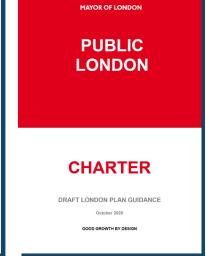












growthindustry

Literature Review

The Stage 1 corporate strategies and policy documents were reviewed against the following criteria in order to inform any strategic themes to guide the public realm vision. A brief description of each criteria is provided as follows;

Carriageway reallocation

Stated reductions in vehicular transport, including delivery vehicles, will reduce the proportions of carriageway space upon the streets, allowing for reallocation to other uses and users such as pedestrians and cyclists

Pedestrian Priority measures

Putting people first and installing measures to prioritise pedestrians will require a rebalancing of streetspace.

Pavement space

Target increase on pedestrian comfort levels of greater than B+ will require reallocation of street space to wider pavements and consdieration of obstacle free movement corridors.

Flexible kerb space

The traditional fixed use of certain kerbside activities like loading and parking will need review to accommodate a more demanding public realm and deliver a dynamic, flexible usage throughout the day.

Traffic calming/reduction

Allied with reduced vehicle numbers, a City-wide 15 mph limit will dramatically alter the speed, safety and ambience of the streetscape, improving physical safety, perception of safety, noise and other environmental benefits.

Accessible routes

Ensuring that all routes are inclusive and accessible to all users is vital to developing a safe, comfortable and inviting public realm.

Connectivity

Well connected, logical routes that respond to desire lines are vital to encourage footfall and cycle flow for onward exploration of the urban environment, providing alternative routes that may relieve pressures on certain streets around and through developments.

Technological impact

Increasingly the impact and expectation of technology is influencing how, where and when we use public space. From environmental evidence-based data, to traffic flows to advertising events and activities, immediate wireless tech can positively inform the users movements and understanding of the urban environment. In-built accessible wireless tech and power can service on street activities and promote interactions.

Increased Dwell Time and Cultural attraction

The ability to safely gather in available public space, beit for seating or for gatherings and events, opens up opportunities for active and passive engagement and enjoyment of the public realm. Dwell time may be occasional, temporary or permanent.

Comfort and Space

The microclimatic conditions and personal comfort of any available public space, for dwelling in particular, is a key consideration. Aspect for solar gain, shade, wind conditions, air and noise quality all inform where we may wish to spend time and how safe it is to spend time is such locations.

Safe & Secure

Creating spaces that are safe to gather, that minimise actual and perceived vehicle intrusion (from both regular road uses and from hostile attack) are important in ensuring spaces are welcoming and offer a safe gathering capacity. The perception of ownership and 'publicness' of a private space may affect the use and activities 'allowable' in the public space available.

Urban Greening

Natural greening measures such as trees, planting beds, vertical greening and green roofs aid in softening the built environment and have the potential to improve environmental conditions offering shade, pollutant filtration and habitat creation.

Biodiversity Increase

A more varied, species rich natural environment can not only reinforce existing habitats within the city but also provide a natural resilience to future climatic variations and challenges.

SUDS measures and water quality

The incorporation of sustinable urban drainage methods within streets and spaces can form an integrated approach to the increasing demands of managing surface water and storm flow. A more permeable, 'slow-release' approach offers a sustainable system of water uptake, ambient temperature control, improvement of water quality and positive time delays en route to combined sewer systems.

Air Quality

Clean air is a pressing issue facing the City. The presence of airborne contaminents and particulates allied with narrow urban corridors can serve to create polluted environments closely related to vehicle traffic and emissions.

Heritage and Character

The character and quality of urban environment within the city is very much informed by the history and heritage that is embodied within the organic, medieval streetscape. Key considerations will relate to impact on character, conservation areas and consistency of material approach and detailing.

Riverfront

The northbank of the River Thames between Blackfriars and Pool of London presents the City's riverside walkway, southfacing and fully connected. Challenges over connectivity to the walkway exist and opportunities for reanimation, activation and reinforcement as an attractive destination in itself are key considerations.

Summary Findings

The Stage 1 strategic documents highlight that publicly accessible space is clearly at a premium (as also highlighted during covid) and that any existing and new spaces need to be able to respond flexibly, innovatively and resiliently to a changing climate, changing workplace environment and changing city with new industries, activities and people to engage with. Indeed many of the recovery reports place a greater value and emphasis on the quality and availability of public space as summarized below;

Enhance space to create an exciting, fully accessible network of streets across London that create a safe, connected environment for walking, running and cycling

City Vision 2036

We will provide new and improved public spaces that include opportunities for culture and exercise. We will continue to invest in the City's gardens, streets and public spaces to ensure they remain attractive and inclusive places to spend time

The Square Mile: Future City

We will **accelerate plans** to make the City more accessible, prioritise people walking and improve cycle routes

The Square Mile: Future City

We will provide world-class streets and public spaces

The Square Mile: Future City

We envision a City brimming with life

Recovery Taskforce 2021

We need to think about places
unique to London, and what gets people
in to the city

London Recharged 2021

Opportunity to use creativity to animate space - demonstrating London's vibrancy and providing 'can't miss' moments of engagement

Culture & Commerce Taskforce

The reason why people come to work isn't to sit at a desk, but to engage with others, inside and outside of the workplace and to enjoy the rich tapestry of life that surrounds their daily routine and leisure time after work

Senior Business Leader, Tony Matharu

The City's streets, gardens
and public spaces are central to its
attraction as an enjoyable, safe place to
walk, cycle and spend time

The Square Mile: Future City

Collaboration spaces facilitate innovation.
Connectivity enables commerce.
Our streets, gardens and public spaces are the setting for all aspects of City life

The Square Mile: Future City

Making the city more attractive to bring people back in demands London makes best use of its physical spaces, through agile and resilient infrastructure – utilising smart technologies that can dynamically monitor and predict demand for roads, public transit and public services

London Recharged 2021

We will work with public, private and academic partners to enhance data collection to pilot and scale innovative solutions. This will include sharing data on working patterns, travel behaviour, and the use of streets and public spaces.

The Square Mile: Future City

Make the Square Mile public realm more climate change ready through adding in more green spaces, urban greening, flood resistant road surfaces, adaptable planting regimes and heat resistant materials

Climate Action Strategy

The Square Mile and City Corporation assets elsewhere are **an exemplar of climate resilience**, pre-empting inevitable climate related risks and impacts, providing a model for others to follow

Climate Action Strategy

The City Corporation will seek to increase the number of trees and their overall canopy cover

City Vision 2036

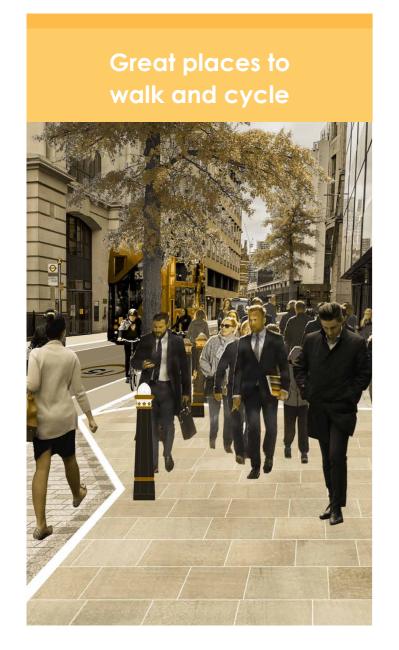
Incorporate **more greenery** into the City's streets and public spaces

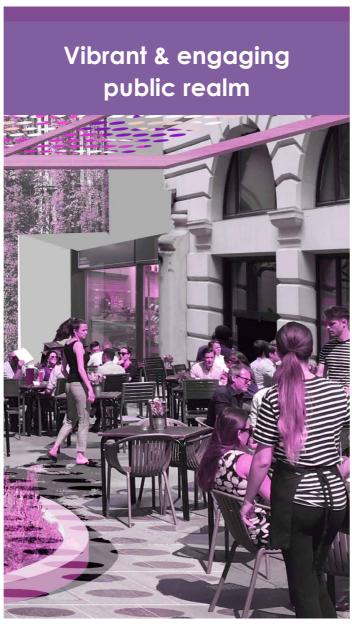
City Streets: Transport Strategy

London has shown global leadership in facilitating the growth of green infrastructure, and to continue to **prioritise all things green** will be more important than ever

London Recharged 2021

Four areas of focus have been identified to help shape the future public realm within the City. These themes have been informed by synthesising best practice research and the literature review findings, distilling the array of corporate goals and policies into a series of categories that may serve to guide the subsequent city-wide public realm vision and any strategic transformative moves. It is proposed that such themes will provide a quality checklist or benchmark against which future changes may be considered to create a world-class public realm and enduring places within the City over the coming years.









Key Themes influencing Public Realm in the City

Each theme has been explored visually throughout the stage 1 process to scenario test and aid workshop discussions









A benchmark review of comparative international cities has been undertaken to explore successful approaches to the process of placemaking and affecting change with the city over time, ultimately leading to the delivery of enhanced places and new public realm interventions.

Key cities discussed have included Milan, New York, Stockholm and San Francisco, where in many cases city council design-led initiatives have developed a successful consultative process to identify, test and deliver new public realm, of a temporary then permanent nature. This process of change has garnered positive support from public users and businesses alike.

All cities have responded to an identified need for public space often arising from a rebalancing of space away from the vehicular in favour of the pedestrian.

It is clear that bold visioning and a commitment to public space has delivered coordinated and considered outcomes that support the process of a robust design-led and visual placemaking approach to create clarity, encourage private investment and foster active community ownership and engagement.

Places responding to the need to rebalance public realm:

Piazze Aperte (Open Squares Programme), Milan, Italy











New York Plaza Programme









Stockholm Street Moves







Rain Guardians, San Francisco



A series of UK exemplars have been reviewed when considering the process of placemaking, with particular focus on neighbouring London boroughs.

Recent Covid recovery measures implemented during 2020 have delivered public realm upgrades in response to social distancing requirements and the need to refashion streetspace for outdoor dining and increased pedestrian and cycle space during the pandemic, much like measures that have been rolled out by the City during Covid recovery phases 1 to 3. Local businesses, particularly in popular retail areas such as Soho in Westminster, have benefited from such measures to adjust licencing to re-populate their streets and react to dining needs and many schemes are being extended into more permanent street changes. It is anticipated that once the City reawakens post pandemic, there may be increased pressure on temporary streetscape upgrades (*subject to staff numbers returning to work and commerical occupancy rates).

Beyond the temporary streetscape responses, other examples of more permanent, sustainable streets to manage the stormflow pavement runoff are being experimented, such as the Marylebone High Street raingardens as part of an improved air quality and biodiversity initiative.

Places responding to the need to rebalance public realm:



Soho, City of Westminster



Soho, City of Westminster



Underutilised public space with extended outdoor seating, Belsize Park



North Audley Street green pavement buildouts, Mayfair



Soho, City of Westminster





Marylebone High Street, Sustainable raingardens, City of Westminster

Mapping

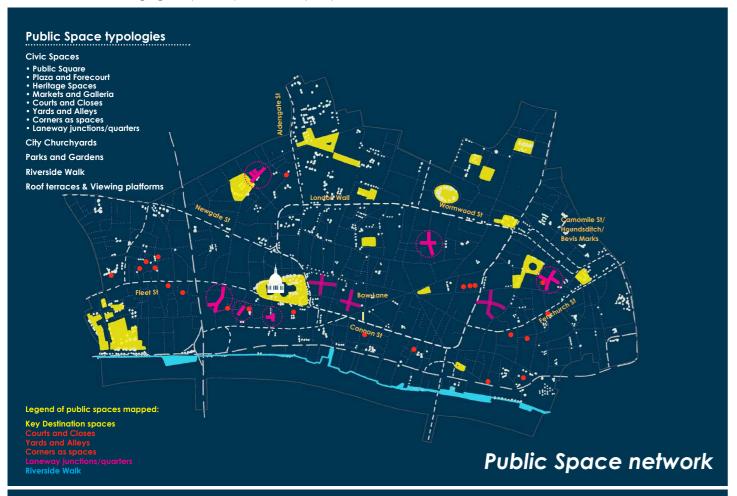
Following the literature review, a city wide mapping exercise has been undertaken in order to better visualise the numerous corporate strategies and policy objectives and where they may overlap on the ground. An initial assessment and categorisation of spatial typologies has been carried out to highlight the range of historic and contemporary urban spaces, streets, alleys and courts alongside green rooftops and the riverside walk. From this an understanding has been gained of where conflicts occur and demands are placed which can inform any future visioning exercises.

Public Space network

Many public spaces are of historic civic origin and perform the backdrop to our nation's ceremonial events; many have developed in association with our civic, cultural, church and commercial buildings providing welcome, setting and valuable public space for gatherings; many offer the seclusion of hidden greenery and nature within the urban fabric. All offer a valuable provision of outdoor publicly accessible space which everyone appreciates is vital to a thriving city of the 21st century.

Offering a strong place function and pedestrian focus, the following open spaces occur within the City's public realm and can be categorised as identified below:

Spatial data was obtained from the City's online web mapping portal and Open Space and Transport Strategies, both of which highlight respectively the hierarchy of spaces and streets.



* identification of public space typologies is not exhaustive

Street Hierarchy network

Within the urban fabric, the City offers a delightful contrast in the range of its streets that have come to define and reinforce its unique sense of place. Streetscape ranges from the historic alleys, lanes and courts of the medieval City, offering shade, comfort and connections for trade and interactions in a small scale environment to, on occasion, the requirement for more expansive, capacitous and celebratory spaces on high days and holidays, national celebrations or markets events and fares within its grand streets.

The street typologies identified below form corridors within the City's public realm, many as historic and processional routes, and bring together varying modes and densities of public and private transport including private cars, taxis, deliveries and cycles alongside public transport in the form of buses.



Mapping

Green Infrastructure within the City

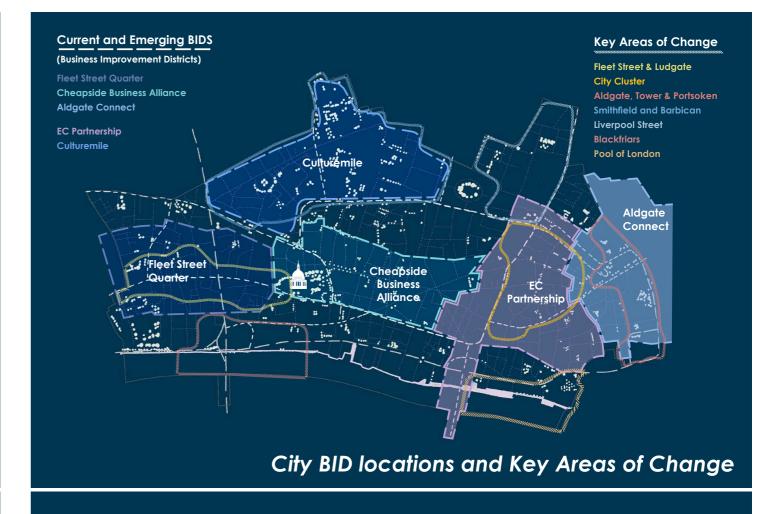
Green infrastucture, in the form of tree planting, green open spaces and green roofs, within the City provide an increasingly important contribution to the biodiverse and public realm network within what is often a dense urban environment. The roofscape of the city is increasingly seen as contributing a valuable open space resource, adding to the vertical stratography of urban greening elements in the form of roof terraces, viewing platforms or extensive roofs, providing an important natural green coverage which not only promotes and supports critical target species habitats but also contribute to sustainable goals including rainwater retention and reductions to the heat island effect. The City will have seen a 6-fold increase in green roof coverage between 2005 and 2024 with current planning approved new development.

Given the acceptance that trees within the city currently, and increasingly will, play an important role in urban greening and environmental mitigation over the coming decades, an assessment has been made to examine the number, distribution, variety, age and health of the 2,500 existing city trees to ascertain their ongoing contribution. A more varied species palette of increased number and increased canopy cover will ensure future resilience to our changing climate.

Legend Green Open Space City Trees Green roof distribution: High clustering of green roofs Low C

Key Areas of Change and BID's

Allied with the existing open and greenspace assessment there is the need to appreciate the proposed key areas of change within the City alongside the BID boundary extents. These areas combined will both impact on the deliverability of targeted public realm interventions going forward. The key areas of change identified within the City Vision 2036 provide a focus for attention and enrichment in public realm terms whilst consultation and alignment with various BID policies may afford opportunities to ensure a high quality, managed and animated urban environment.



growth industry

The Time for Change:

There is an understanding that the city's streets and spaces are facing many pressures and will need to adapt over the coming years. This change needs to be a design-led, proactive response that anticipates changing needs, changing technologies and vitally, a changing climate. As the connective and social fabric of the City, there is a high expectation that the spaces that make up the public realm will play a major part in delivering change to the city and respond to many ambitious requirements and objectives as outlined in a suite of recent documents including the City's Climate Action Strategy and Corporate 2036 Vision, the City's Transport Strategy alongside our post pandemic recovery as captured in London Recharged.

Post Pandemic is a timely chance to review and respond to the changing demands facing the city's public realm and such recent events have highlighted the value of publicly accessible, democratic open space in supporting the wellbeing and mental and physical health of city users.

Today

Short term

0-5 years

(2020-2025)

Medium term

5-15 years

Long term 20-25 years

upto 2044

(2025-2035)

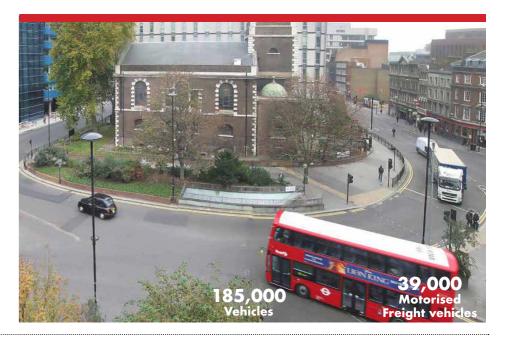
The City's streets, gardens and public spaces will be attractive places to spend time.

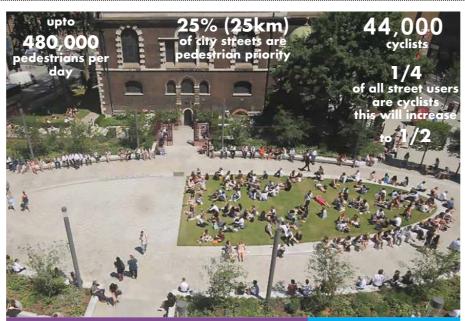
We will accelerate our plans to rebalance vehicle use, prioritise walking, enable cycling, improve air quality and provide more public space. The experience of travelling through and spending time in the Square Mile must be world class, for the benefit of residents, visitors and workers alike.world class, for the benefit of residents, visitors and workers alike.

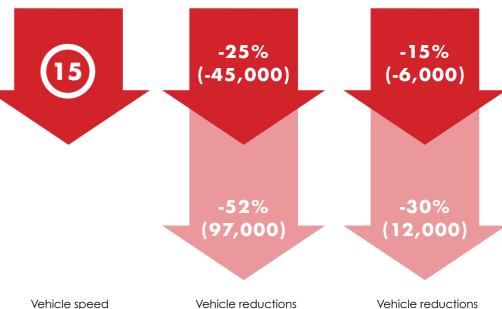
Covid Recovery Taskforce 2021

Strategic targets presented within the City Vision 2036 and Transport Strategy highlight the both the competing challenges and opportunities within the public realm and the subsequent balance required between all users over the coming years which will directly affect the quality and sense of City places.









reduction

^{*} note: data taken from Transport Strategy 2019 and Literature review

Finding the right balance

The range and hierarchy of the streets and spaces that make up the places of the City have been reviewed. It is clear that open spaces are at a premium, much prized and often affected or increasingly created by new development both at grade or on rooftop. Additionally the appeal and charm of the many smaller Churchyard and garden spaces are appreciated in providing an equally valuable sense of place and identity unique to the City.



The public realm vision will consider all public spaces and their contribution towards City life. However, based upon the literature review and mapping exercises, those spaces that may provide opportunities for change often face the greatest pressures. Such spaces as identified below fall somewhere between the open public spaces and squares (large, high capacity but few and far between) and the more intimate, historic heritage and Churchyard spaces (many in number (over 100), often secluded, constrained and less capacitous). The places therefore to be considered for change sit in between and invariably pose the challenge of how and where to rebalance the relationship between all users and movement patterns, vibrancy, activities and measures to support climate resilience.

Public spaces under greatest pressure of change



Smaller Churchyards & Gardens

......

City Churchyards

Heritage Spaces

Parks and Gardens

Public Square
Plaza and Forecourt
Heritage Spaces
Markets and Galleria
Parks and Gardens

Pirareida Walla

Larger Civic Spaces

Riverside Walk

Roof terraces and Viewing platforms

Streets
Lanes
Courts & Closes
Yards & Alleys
Corners as Places
Green Lanes

«......»

Active
High Capacity
Hard paved

Tranquil
Low capacity
More natural character

Two cross-departmental workshops on key topics were held as part of the Stage 1 review process in order to discuss the implications of different strategic agendas within the same limited public space and how best to achieve a coordinated and balanced approach. Points raised within the workshops will be taken forward as key considerations to guide the next stage of work.

Technical feedback was invited from colleagues representing the following City departments;

Planning policy
Development Management Design
City Transportation
Highways
Corporate Strategy
Open Spaces
Cleansing
Licencing
Resilience
Cultural & Visitor Development
City Public Realm

Workshop 1: Competing demands for street and public space

This workshop focused on how to reconcile the varying demands placed upon public space to assist in meeting corporate aspirations with an acknowledgement of the constraints of below ground infrastructure and archaeology and above ground traffic patterns, ongoing constructions, utilities and maintenance. The workshop discussions sought to test various benefits, challenges and demands on public realm based around series of spatial scenarios of key streets and spaces.

Scenarios explored the potential rebalancing and activation of the public realm with pedestrian, cyclist and urban greening measures introduced on the following typologies: streets, street corners, junctions, courts, lanes and alleys.

Workshop 2: Flexible streets and public space

This workshop focused on how achieve a flexibility in use and management within the streetscape to ensure that such spaces are of high quality, responsive, safe and welcoming and adaptable, particularly in aiding the City's post-pandemic recovery.

The process of making places and testing of spatial scenarios was presented using best practice exemplars with discussions held over the dynamic use of the kerbside environment, timed closures, tactical meanwhile interventions and urban greening. Issues of maintenance and stewardship of space, safety and security, effective wider communication of changes, management of traffic, cleansing and utilities access, assessment of risks and licencing, revenue returns and legal implications were all discussed.





Workshop 1 agenda Workshop 2 agenda

A Public Realm Vision for the City

Outline Brief

The below components are an indication of the likely scope of the public realm vision for the City. This brief will be finalised in the next stage and will guide development of the vision document.

Part 1: Making Places in the City

What is Placemaking?

- Placemaking and Public Realm
- Definition and scope of public space within the City

Requirements of Place (for example: characterful, connected, attractive, resilient, inclusivity, equality, security, animated)

The Process of Placemaking

- Placemaking in the Planning process
- Outline of design process, project lifecycle and timescales (incl. meanwhile use/tactical urbanism), consultation standards and process for stakeholder ngagement
- Placemaking in relation to Corporate Ambitions / Key areas for change / BIDS
- Placemaking in relation to public realm SPD and design toolkit
- Management and maintenance of places

Part 2: The Places that make up the City

The evolution of the City's places and spaces

(origins/anglo-saxon/medieval/20C)

The places that make up the City today

(spatial typologies, description/examples)

- Public Spaces
- (Open space, parks, gardens, courts and churchyards)
- Street space (Streets, lanes, yards and alleys)

Part 3: Pressures affecting Place

The Time for Change Emerging Trends Key Themes for Placemaking

- Great places to walk and cycle
- Vibrant and engaging public realm
- Innovative and flexible spaces
- Naturally resilient streets and spaces

Part 4: Public Realm Vision for the City

Scope of the Vision

Strategic Vision Framework

City-wide vision outlining strategic ambitions and the opportunities for strategic transformation of the City's public realm

Transformational moves

A series of key strategic moves focused on typlogies of spaces with illustrative design suggestions that will deliver change, inform development and enhance character within the City's public realm

Part 5: Evaluation and Monitoring

The process for evalution and measuring success Maintenance and care of the public realm

Glossary and Appendices

Strategic document review summary

PLAZAS QUAREMARKETLANEPAS SAGERIVER WALK WAY COURTY ARD WALK WAY POCKETPARK CHUR CHY ARD LANEY ARD ALLEY RIVER LANE CLOSEALLEY STREET MARKETPAS SAGES QUAREY ARD MARKET CLOSE PLAZACHUR CHY ARD COURTRIVER CLOSEROOFTER RACEALLEY LANE CHUR CHY ARD STREETS QUARELANEALLEY Y ARD CHUR CHY ARD PLAZAPOCKETPARKSTREET MARKETPLAZAGARDENS QUAREWALK WAY LANE