

Public Art Strategy

4.3 Existing Public Art Position in Chester...

Public Art Documents

Several documents exist within the local authority that provide guidance on the mechanisms for securing public art. The primary aims and objects of these strategies remain relevant, and include best practice on commissioning which should be adopted in the development of projects in Chester. A Public Art Strategy for the newly formed Cheshire West and Chester Council, as well as a review of all the documents from previous authorities is currently being undertaken by the Public Arts Officer for Cheshire West and Chester Council. These documents are listed below:

1. Chester's Public Art Strategy, 2001

Chester specific and covering a wider area than the PRDG. This includes identification of key locations:

- Gateways to the City – e.g. roundabouts.
- Northgate Development.
- Corridors, including the canal corridor.
- Places with existing briefs: Rows, Castle, Walls, Gorse Stacks, Old Port, Chester Deeside Transport System, Public parks and squares.

2. Vale Royal's Public Arts Strategy, 2008

This strategy includes best practice guidelines and a toolkit to assist in the stages of selecting and commissioning artists.

3. Cheshire's Public Art Guidance, 2008

The public art guidance document includes information on placing art in public places.

4. Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Public Art

This sets out that the Council requires 1% of construction costs as a contribution to public art.

5. Developer Leaflet 2008

The developer's leaflet provides a brief explanation on public art and how the SPD applies to developers.

6. Cheshire West and Chester Website

An audit and trails of existing artwork in Chester appears on the Council's web site.

7. Spaces (www.spacescheshire.com)

The Spaces web site has been developed to progress the debate about the role of public art. The site could be used to circulate briefs and proposals for Chester and showcase projects.

8. The Chester Heritage Interpretation Masterplan (IMP)

The IMP 'is an audience focussed, evidence based strategy for telling Chester's stories in the public realm'. It was produced as part of a holistic body of planning activity that will provide a strategic framework for achieving the Chester Renaissance vision of 'making Chester a must-see European city by 2015'.

The IMP addresses the interpretation needs of the Chester Culture Park, an area covering the historic city centre, Grosvenor Park, the riverside and canal basin. The report combines strategic recommendations for interpretive aims, themes and institutional arrangements with proposals for a range of specific projects, a design rationale and illustrated design concepts.

There are several sites identified in the IMP for public art. These are identified as projects to be taken forward in the strategy section of this Public Arts Strategy.

Cultural Infrastructure

Chester has under utilized assets and a lack of infrastructure and visibility for the arts. There are a lot of events, exhibitions and activities but they have a low profile. There are limited opportunities to attend art galleries and theatres, with the most prominent venue in the area being Theatre Clwyd in nearby Mold, though the Forum Studio Theatre does stage regular productions. There are quality arts organisations experienced in developing commissions for the public realm: Cheshire Dance and Chester Performs. The Grosvenor Museum holds the most prominent art collection in Chester and runs regular public workshops.

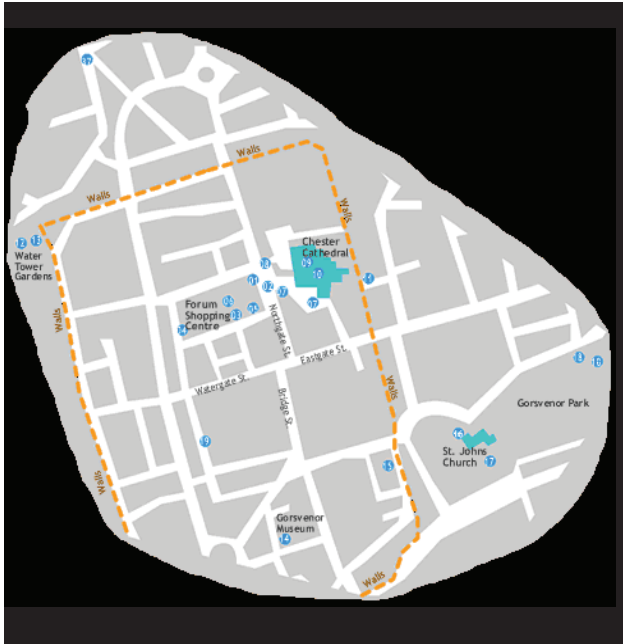
Existing Pieces of Public Art in Chester

Chester displays a long history of art elements incorporated into buildings and the built environment which add to the locally distinctive nature of Chester's architecture and public spaces. Where commissioning is carried out or suggested it tends to be figurative and in bronze. Bronze is seen as a quality material and figurative work less challenging.



'A Celebration of Chester' in front of Town Hall

The current locations of public art are marked on this map which is part of an online public art trail called 'Walls and Within'.



Walls and Within public art trail map

Temporary and Performance

As well as commissioning for the public realm, art happening in public places needs to be considered as an important element in Chester. This includes performance, temporary work, installations and light. The winter festival includes the existing Ghost Walks and Up the Walls event. The Grosvenor Museum, Chester Performs and Cheshire Dance have all used events and commissioning in Chester City Centre and this should be built on as part of tourism packages.

Cheshire Dance have been devising larger scale works in the last couple of years that match their grass roots work with professional dancers, community work and residencies with internationally recognised artists to produce multi sited work. In Chester they took part in 'Roam the Rows' project to explore The Rows with small installations and performances and a larger performance in Bridge Street. Cheshire Dance also carried out a very successful project at Crewe Station as a gateway commission part of the 'Year of the Gardens', which was given Cultural Olympiad status.

Temporary artwork can also be commissioned in an opportunistic manner to improve the public realm, such as through the use of empty shop fronts to animate the street and the creative use of sites awaiting redevelopment.



Station Stationary dance installation as part of the Cheshire Year of Gardens by The BodyCartography Project and Cheshire Dance, Crewe railway station. © Adam Holloway



Airstrip, ash tree installation at Big Chill music festival, 2006 by Tod Hanson©