

Environmental and Planning Review Committee

Public Realm and Streetscene



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What is the Public Realm?

- The public realm is made up of the parts of the City which are available for use by everyone.
- These can include streets, parks, squares, arcades and public buildings whether publicly or privately owned.
- They can be designed to create a variety, safe and special character (informal, civic, recreational, and commercial).
- Public realm has the potential to act as a catalyst for regeneration in a city, by making it a more attractive place to invest, work and Live.



Public Space and Public Realm

- Public space is defined as all the spaces between buildings that can be accessed by the public – including all outdoor areas, roads, parks, and pedestrian areas, cycle routes and other open spaces.
- ‘The state of our streets and other public spaces has a major impact on quality of life’ CABE: Better Civic Buildings and Spaces 2001.
- Public spaces are a barometer of a community.
- The quality of public spaces affects all of us wherever we live and work.



Life in Public Spaces

Dr Jan Gehl the renowned Danish public space expert, describes life in public spaces as falling into three broad but distinct categories:

- **Necessary Activities**
- **Optional Activities**
- **Social Activities**

- Sunderland City Centre generally operates on necessary activities and currently other activities are limited
- Sunderland has the potential to perform on all three levels

Why Are Good Public Spaces Important

- A good city will offer a wide range of attractive social activities in order to attract this life
- In poor quality cities it is evident that only necessary activities occur
- Good quality cities will provide all the opportunities to partake in all activities.
- To achieve this consideration must be given to the types of user groups that may participate in different activities.



What Makes a Good Public Space

- The success of a good public space relies heavily on the presence of **people** within the space.
- Spaces should be designed for a range of user groups and should consider the safety, protection and enjoyment of people within the space.
- The attractiveness of the space, good design, scale and visual appearance will heighten the enjoyment of using the space for the user.
- A good space will retain its own sense of place and identity.



Management and Maintenance

- The success of public space relies heavily on how it is managed and maintained.
- Once the rejuvenation of a public space is complete, it is important to realise that the physical management and maintenance of it is just beginning.
- The main purpose of rejuvenating Sunderland's public spaces and creating new ones is to ensure greater numbers of people are attracted to use them.

Management and Maintenance

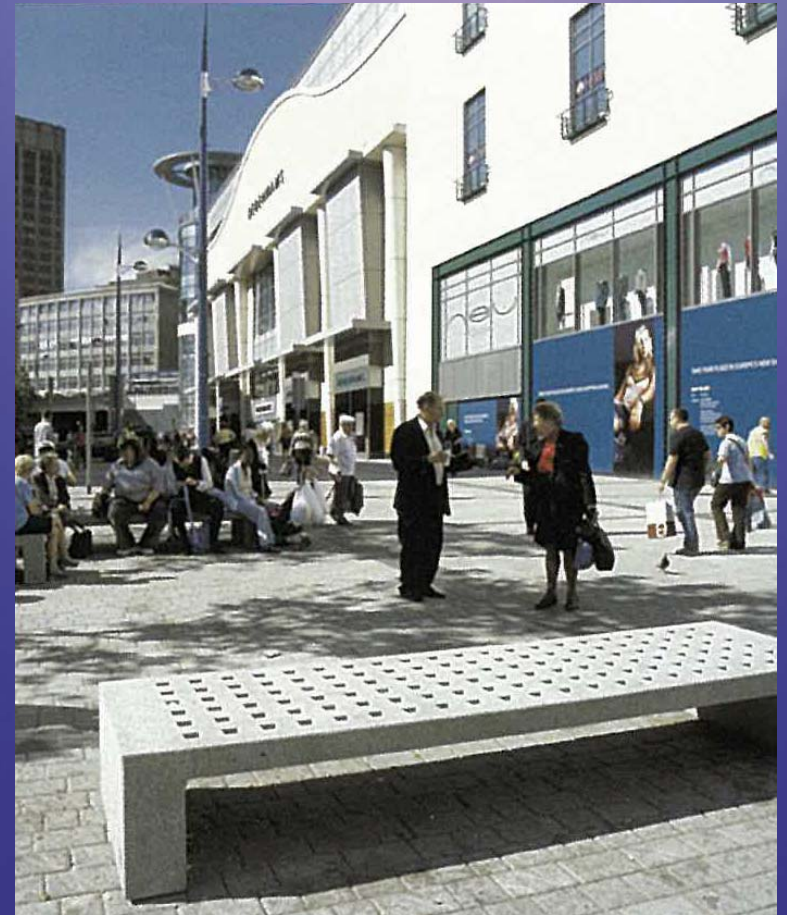
- A well maintained high quality public realm has the potential to bring significant economic regeneration and investment to the City. A good example is the impact of Sunnyside Gardens.



Precedents

- Increasingly cities are having to compete for potential 'customers'.
- The main competition is from other cities.
- Given the shortage of high quality public spaces, it is important that the City Council encourages the revitalisation of existing public spaces and promotes new high quality spaces.
- Refurbishment of Sunnyside Gardens is a good example of how investment in the public realm can radically transform the image and perception of an area.

Precedents



Precedents



Precedents



Sunderland City Centre

- City Centre has a poor quality public realm with a limited number of quality public spaces
- No traditional public square of a substantial scale
- Poor maintenance of street furniture in some areas detracts from the quality of the public realm
- High level of street clutter and uncoordinated public realm
- Poor maintenance of paving materials
- Vehicular traffic given priority over pedestrians at various nodes within the city
- Lack of street planting
- Poor pedestrian linkages between public open spaces



Public Realm outside the City Centre

- NOT JUST ABOUT THE CITY CENTRE – IT'S ABOUT THE WHOLE CITY
- We need to think about the quality of public realm created in new housing developments
- Other local centres and parts of the City require public realm improvements e.g. Roker seafront
- Many of the issues in relation to the city centre are applicable citywide
- Major financial implications associated with undertaking public realm improvements and long term maintenance
- Concord Environmental Improvements cost £0.9 million, Sunnyside Gardens £2.2 million.



The National Agenda

- CABE believes that streets need to work better for a range of users and uses.
- *Manual for streets*, a joint DfT/DCLG project, has replaced *Design bulletin 32* as the guidance for the design of residential and lightly trafficked streets. Places a greater emphasis on creating high quality streets and places.

- A survey carried out by MORI (Consumer Focus for Public Services – People’s Panel Wave 5, March – April 2000) asked:

“What would most improve the quality of your life in this area?” At least two of the following appeared in everyone’s top four responses:

- cleaner streets, including rubbish and dog fouling
- reducing crime
- more activities for children and young people
- improve parks and open spaces
- improving the street infrastructure including paving, lighting etc.

How to Improve Sunderland's Public Realm

In order to achieve a safe and convenient pattern of streets and walks it will be important to:

- **Overcome pedestrian barriers**
- **Ensure streets are safe and well overlooked**
- **Co-ordinate street furniture and paving**
- **Re-enforce linkages**

How to Improve Sunderland's Public Realm

- Sunderland already has a number of parks and squares.
- It is vital to ensure that these spaces are as attractive and well used as possible
- In addition opportunities for new open spaces must be sought.

15 key squares, parks and spaces to be provided or enhanced within the central area:

1. West Park
2. Holmeside Square
3. Vaux Square and Magistrates Square
4. Stadium Square
5. Festival Park and Galley's Gill
6. Empire Square
7. Town Park
8. University Square
9. Market Square
10. Station Square
11. Mowbray Park
12. Old Port Square
13. Tavistock Place
14. Sunnyside North
15. Sunnyside Gardens

Total estimated costs = £30 million +

How to secure public realm improvements?

- City squares, parks and spaces may be secured through developer contributions via section 106 agreements and developer agreements.
- But this will be a fraction of the cost and amount of new public realm required.
- In total it is estimated that public realm improvement works to the Central Area could cost more than £30 million.
- Undertaking public realm improvements works on a city wide scale in other local centres is also likely to cost a considerable amount of money.
- Funding from One North East ? Reluctance to fund public realm works.

What Are We Doing

- Sunnyside – Phase 2 and 3 public realm improvements will be implemented subject to securing funding.
- Improvements to Sunnyside Gardens, Concord ,Ryhope and Houghton Centre completed
- The Central Area Design Strategy will be presented to Cabinet on the 10th October. The document outlines how the public realm within the City Centre can be improved.
- Officers are preparing a masterplan for the sea front
- The City Council is working with the arc to bring forward a number of strategic regeneration sites including Farrington Row, Vaux and Holmeside all of which will create significant amounts of new public realm.

Critical Components

- **Leadership** - vital for raising the profile of the public realm and allocating resources
- **Partnership** - vital to delivering strong partnerships. Effective and sustained partnerships are for managing the complex distribution of ownership and responsibilities
- **Community Involvement** - Community involvement is essential to getting a scheme that really works and is sustainable in the long-term.
- **Quality and Innovation** - The best public realm schemes strive for the highest achievable quality.

Conclusions

- **WE CAN AND SHOULD SEEK TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM BOTH IN THE CITY CENTRE AND RIGHT ACROSS THE CITY.**
- **Must take inspiration from other cities and see how they have been transformed through investment in the public realm.**
- **City centre must be a priority as it is of key importance to the long term prosperity of the city as a whole.**
- **Does not imply ignoring other parts of the City Centre**
- **Developers to contribute towards creating new high quality public realm and contributing to the long term maintenance of such areas**
- **FINAL THOUGHTWho pays ?**

The Council should signal its intent by committing funds towards public realm improvements.