



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL



**PUBLIC ART
STRATEGY**
2025-2035

Consultation

We want to include everyone in this discussion. This is your town; we want to make sure public art reflects who we are and all our shared experiences. Please join the conversation.

This Strategy was informed and shaped by conversations across the town with residents, artists, arts and cultural practitioners, arts and creative organisations, and council staff including:

- establishing and working with a Community Steering Group
- 65 hours of in-depth conversations with over 180 people
- 6 artist-led workshops for residents in 6 electoral wards
- 6 focus group events/activities
- involving young people, older people and under-represented minority communities.

The conversations:

- asked local people how they want to be included and what to celebrate
- informed the development of this strategy and its implementation.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in the development of this strategy, including the members of the Community Steering Group, the Young Creatives who created the poster artwork and assisted with the events, and, most importantly, everyone who participated in the conversation. Thank you for your enthusiasm for public art, your care for your community and interest in Watford's public spaces, and your challenge to us to live up to our shared ambition that the town's public realm celebrates the rich diversity of our communities.

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Foreword

Watford can be the town where its residents lead on the creation of public art and actively engage with the processes involved. Curated and created by Watford for Watford.

Watford is unique and so are our people. Full of energy, and always ready to challenge preconceptions and the accepted way of doing things. We are a place that thinks and behaves differently with the vision and creative drive to turn exciting ideas into action.

I am proud to introduce our Public Art Strategy for Watford. It has been shaped and led by our community and reflects what makes Watford exceptional. We know public art can add enormous value to Watford, building community pride, contributing to a sense of belonging, transforming spaces and boosting economic vitality.

The strength of our strategy is that it is grounded by a series of conversation we have held across the town. We are now ready to bring it to life, working together to imagine and create contemporary spaces, bringing together nature and culture in places that are much loved by us all.

Our ambition is for Watford to be recognised for creating outstanding public art experiences, led and embraced by our residents and community.

I am excited to see where this Strategy, and the accompanying Public Art Commissioning Toolkit, will take us and I really hope that it inspires you to join us.

Cllr Aga Dychton, Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Community



Introduction

This public art strategy provides a framework for public art for Watford for the next ten years.

It has been developed as a shared vision to embed public art into the fabric of the town, reflecting Watford's unique history, its diverse community, its creativity and its energy. It aims to support the development of public artwork that can help to:

- **Enable Watford's residents** to enjoy and experience high quality public art, and to co-curate, co-design and produce work themselves
- **Enhance the quality of the public realm**, including the re-use and reimagining of areas on the periphery as well as the animating of new spaces
- **Support the town's cultural and creative sector**, capturing and promoting the town's creativity, diversity and personality, achieving greater unity and collective pride
- **Enhance the cultural offer and contribute new key moments in Watford's programme of festivals and events**, contributing to developing year-round cultural activity for residents and visitors.

Consultation provided an opportunity to reconsider what public art might be, what is most relevant for Watford's residents, what represents them and how they want to be represented and involved in the process of creating public art. As part of the consultation a series of Neighbourhood Exchange events with artist-led activities generating conversations about public art and sense of place were held. Their purpose was to share people's ideas, stories and insights on what makes Watford special to inform this strategy. Through these exchanges the appetite for different types of

practice, levels of engagement and scale of future public artworks has been identified.

This strategy has been produced to help artists, community organisations, planners, developers, investors and others to work more effectively and collaboratively. It will be delivered through partnerships, including with developers, arts and cultural organisations and businesses, the council, the Business Improvement District (BID), artists, makers and craftspeople, and above all with the residents of the town.

It sets out a vision, a series of objectives and the actions for their delivery. It identifies what the council will do over the next ten years. It has been developed to sit alongside the existing planning documents and is supported by a Public Art Commissioning Toolkit which will provide guidance for those commissioning public art. With a Public Art Audit of Watford's existing artworks creating an archive to inform and promote.





What is public art?

We define public art as art in any media that is created for the general public through a public process. It does not have to be visual or permanent. Public art is for everyone and can be found in public places: the streets, parks, undeveloped sites, stations, hospitals and public buildings.

Our approach is that there is no fixed definition or form or way of creating public art. It can be temporary, permanent, or time-limited; it can be a performance, a thing to experience or look at, listen to or participate in. The process of creating it can be collaborative, co-produced or co-curated or not. It can create connections between people, places and ideas. Or it can be an artist's response to the site, context or issue.

It can be a small quiet artwork or encounter, or a mass town-wide spectacle. It might be there one day and gone the next, but live on in the collective memory. It might be playful, an architectural or landscape intervention, sound, light, digital, performative, processional, virtual or sculpture or a myriad of other forms. It should surprise, delight, challenge and provoke a reaction or stimulate debate. It may change your perceptions, reveal something hidden or neglected, or be a permanent reminder to celebrate or acknowledge an individual, group or moment as a memorial or monument.

Public art has become an exciting way to celebrate community and heritage and, when commissioned in a careful and considered way, it can make a thoughtful contribution to the local landscape. As places change, public art can help to carve out a distinctive identity for a new development, or it can provide an inspirational focus for a new neighbourhood. Public art can also bring people from different communities together by starting conversations and engaging local residents in their surroundings. From wayfinding, placemaking, or simply acknowledging an area's unique history, public art is a welcome opportunity to provide a stage for local artists. It can, and should, involve local people in the creative process.

Unlike indoor galleries and museums, public art outdoors is not constrained by walls, and this freedom enables endless different mediums from multimedia, paintings, photography and sculpture to sound, light and kinetics. But it needs to be the right piece, in the right place.

There is a wealth of arts activity in the town, from artist-led events, such as Big Events, the Watford Fringe and a breadth of community arts activities. There is also a collection of permanent artworks from memorials, to sculptures to murals.



The impact of public art

Public art can contribute to a range of benefits including:

Environmental & Sustainability

- **Regeneration:** artists as designers, collaborators, facilitators and provocateurs inputting into the design of the public realm. Artists' creative value can improve the design process and design solutions without always creating an artwork.
- **Place-making:** or 'place-shaping' is a collaborative process of observing, listening to, and asking questions of the people who use a particular space in order to understand their needs and aspirations for that space. Working to create a vision around the places they view as important can transform spaces into places. With temporary or meanwhile uses, art on hoardings, artist-led events programmes
- **Sustainability:** artists can respond to the challenging issues of climate change and engage people with their environment to make them more aware of their impact upon it. Sustainable approaches should be adopted to reduce the impact on the environment.
- **Legibility:** providing visual cues such as glimpsing the Watford Letters outside the station or the Elton John mural on the Library, so that people know where they are and can better navigate the town.

Social

- **Civic pride:** art and artist-led projects can encourage people to rediscover and interact with the town in new ways.
- **Social Inclusion:** art can bring people together to participate in community events, participate in decision making and learning about their neighbours through various forms of artist-led engagement.
- **Improving health and wellbeing:** arts and health go in tandem. Research demonstrates the importance of arts activity in rehabilitation, mental health, palliative care, pain management and healing. Including via art trails, artist-led walks, workshops and events in green spaces such as parks, by the river or canal.
- **Celebration of diversity and encouragement of community cohesion:** art provides an opportunity to reflect the people and place, bring people together to create, participate and contribute to addressing community concerns for safety, inclusiveness, diversity, and

belonging.

- **Promotion of inclusivity and equality:** through equitable processes of artist selection and services procurement.

Economic

- **Supporting local businesses:** By adopting a locally-sourced approach for materials and services. Including collaborations with local cultural venues and organisations.
- **Providing local employment opportunities:** Working with local artists, craftspeople, designers, creatives, production / fabrication, event organisers and production managers, arts, events and cultural organisations.
- **Enhancing the visual appeal and encouraging inward investment:** Creative vitality can enhance the appeal of the town. Existing cultural venues can benefit from additional support and investment to continue to provide cultural programming, employment and engagement opportunities.
- **Contribute to promoting a sense of positivity:** Through unique, innovative and meaningful engaging interventions and participation.
- **Contribute to attracting visitors to the town:** Unique connections between artworks and their environments can offer visitors insights into local identity. Local materials and imagery can become features, and local traditions or myths can be celebrated.

Cultural

- **Debate and discussion:** Artists can introduce new and challenging cultural ideas. A crucial function of public art is to support a diverse and tolerant society. Public art can support democracy, demonstrating that the town is leading positive change where ideas can be openly discussed and debated.
- **Celebration of cultural heritages:** Every community has its own cultural identity – often with shared history and traditions. This ties in with a person's sense of engagement, belonging, understanding and appreciation of their 'place'. Public art can enable these to be shared, highlighted, and debated.
- **Celebration of heritage:** Making art is a diverse activity that can involve artists, designers, historians, ecologists and many others. Public art is often a process of infusing places with stories of historical significance by interpreting and reflecting the social and political mood of the place. Or artists using artefacts, historic

maps, photographs, films etc. to explore local heritage with schools and communities.

- **Opportunities for people to participate in the arts:** Understanding and tolerance shared by a diverse community can support the creative economy and attract innovative people to work in the arts and creative industries of the town.
- **Appreciation of art:** Through public art, children and young people can explore their town and its history, or imagine its future and have opportunities to contribute to artworks.

'Watford needs public art that is friendly, fun, welcoming and gets people out, gets people interacting. An antidote to the constant gloom of news, artwork that keeps people's spirits up and that is hopeful.'

Consultation participant

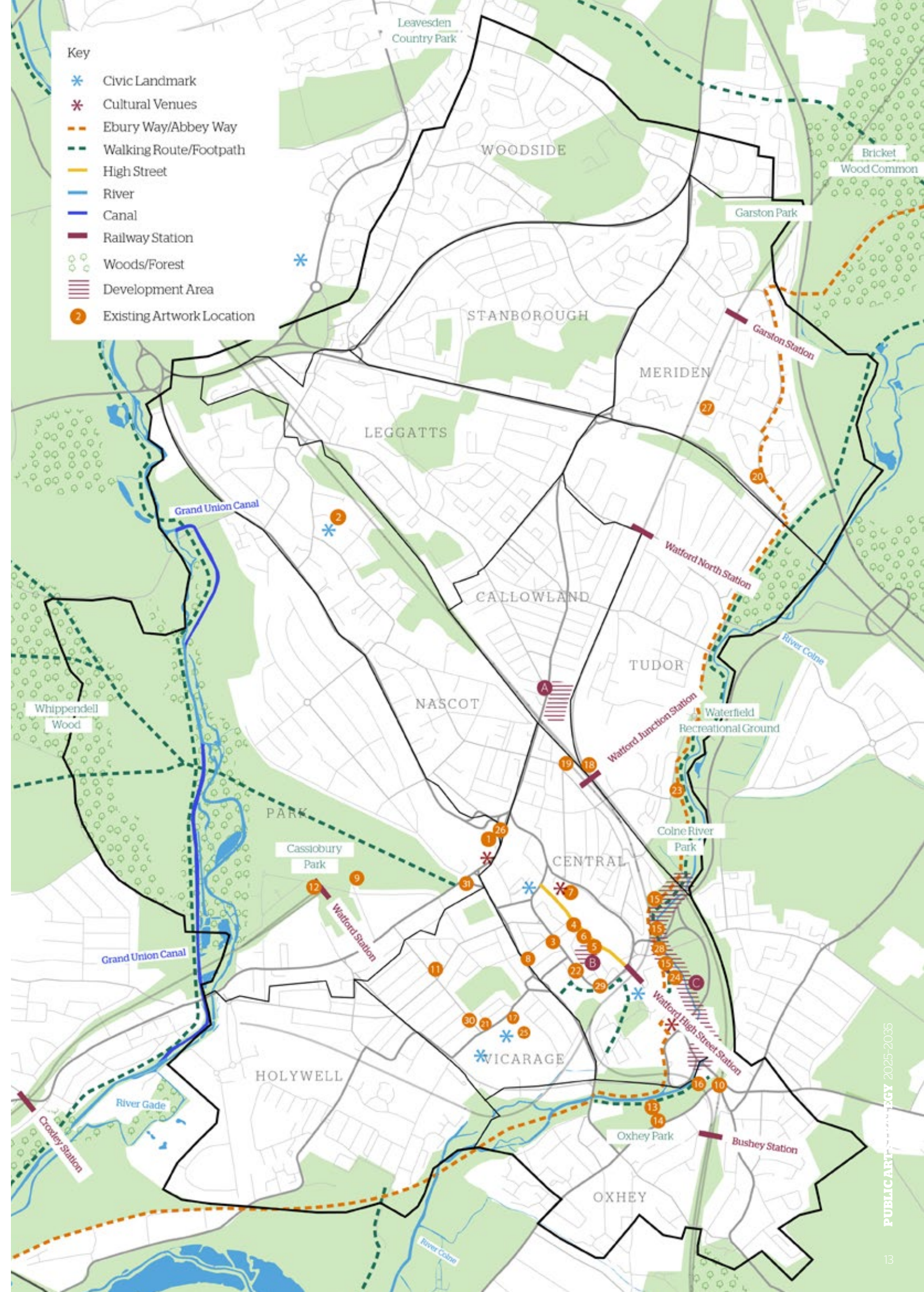


Public art in the town

Map of existing public art

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 Watford Peace Memorial | 19 Welcome to Watford |
| 2 The Passing of the Wind | 20 Graham Taylor OBE mural |
| 3 Man and Woman | 21 Graham Taylor OBE mural |
| 4 Festival Friendship Columns | 22 Watford FC Subway Mural |
| 5 The Hornet | 23 Rediscovering the River Colne Mural |
| 6 The Learning Curve | 24 River Flower Pillar Murals |
| 7 Lustre | 25 Sir Elton John, mural |
| 8 Travelodge Mural | 26 Sir Elton John, mural |
| 9 The Owl Tree | 27 Cow Lane Subway Mural |
| 10 Ghost Train | 28 River Colne Waterfields Recreation Mural |
| 11 Printing Industry | 29 Watford FC 1999 Promotion Mural |
| 12 Labyrinth | 30 West Watford Community Centre Mural |
| 13 Conker | 31 The Overpass Suite |
| 14 Horse Chestnut Leaf Seat | |
| 15 Colne River Sculpture Trail | |
| 16 Heron | |
| 17 Graham Taylor OBE | |
| 18 The Beehive / Urban Ecosystem | |

See Public Art Audit for updates.





Our approach

The vision is for Watford to become one of the UK's leading towns for public art produced with, and by, its residents, with wellbeing and inclusivity at its heart. 'We are Watford' being made visible in its myriad of forms.

Watford is vibrant town, known for its great shopping, entertainment and leisure offer, its parks and football club, and a rich history based on the printing brewing industries. Watford's strength is in its diversity and the vibrancy of its people and a cultural scene encompassing professional performing arts companies of national significance, successful grassroots initiatives, and a music and 'maker' community.

There are hidden and unexpected or uncelebrated buildings and objects of interest, from Brutalist architecture to the historic buildings and classic 1930s architecture to the coal and wine duty marker, water troughs and street name plaques.

This context has provided the foundation for an aspirational and unique strategy. Public art can be anything we want it to be, with the residents of Watford being central to shaping what they want for their town.

Art and culture bring people together. It provides a sense of vitality in local areas, on the high streets, in the town centre and in the new developments which contribute so much to Watford's current and future health and prosperity.

The strategy is underpinned and shaped by our commitment to **access, inclusion, participation** and **sustainability**. Every person from every community can find pride in themselves and their town and participation means community enjoyment of events, festivals and artworks. Digital participation can take Watford to the world and the world to Watford. Like the green spaces that distinguish our town, there is a sustainability thread through everything.

The strategy is an invitation to highlight and connect with the parks and river, public spaces, the architecture, and the amazing engineering structures, and combine these with the creative talent of the residents to realise what Watford has imagined. By developing engaging public artworks and temporary interventions and programmes in public spaces opportunities can be created for exploring the town in new ways.

All new public art, temporary and permanent, should meet the key criteria of **quality, access and sustainability** and where possible involve meaningful participation. These guiding principles, developed from the consultation, are underpinned by the overarching aim for a sustainable and creative town based on a collective and collaborative approach.

Recommendations

The ambition is for high quality design public art, meaningful community engagement and participation, and the promotion of community activity through cultural activity – with sustainability at the heart of everything. This will be achieved through six objectives, each with a delivery plan.

Objectives

A. Promote and secure the delivery of high quality public art in Watford

Action: improve the practice of commissioning, delivery and management of public art

B. Support artists and vibrant places in neighbourhoods with collaborative projects

Action: support artists and community co-creation and collaboration. Improve residents experience and participation

C. Funding public art

Action: expand funding mechanisms for new public art

D. Consider the existing public art and identify new opportunities for placemaking, community cohesion and wellbeing

Action: support opportunities for artworks in new locations and settings

E. Manage and maintain and promote Watford's public art

Action: improve the awareness and experience of the town's public art

F. Develop a pilot project and programme for delivery

Action: testing the toolkit and embedding best practice processes.



Potential artwork locations

Potential areas for artworks (permanent and temporary)

The locations identified by the consultation and to be considered are:

Short term:

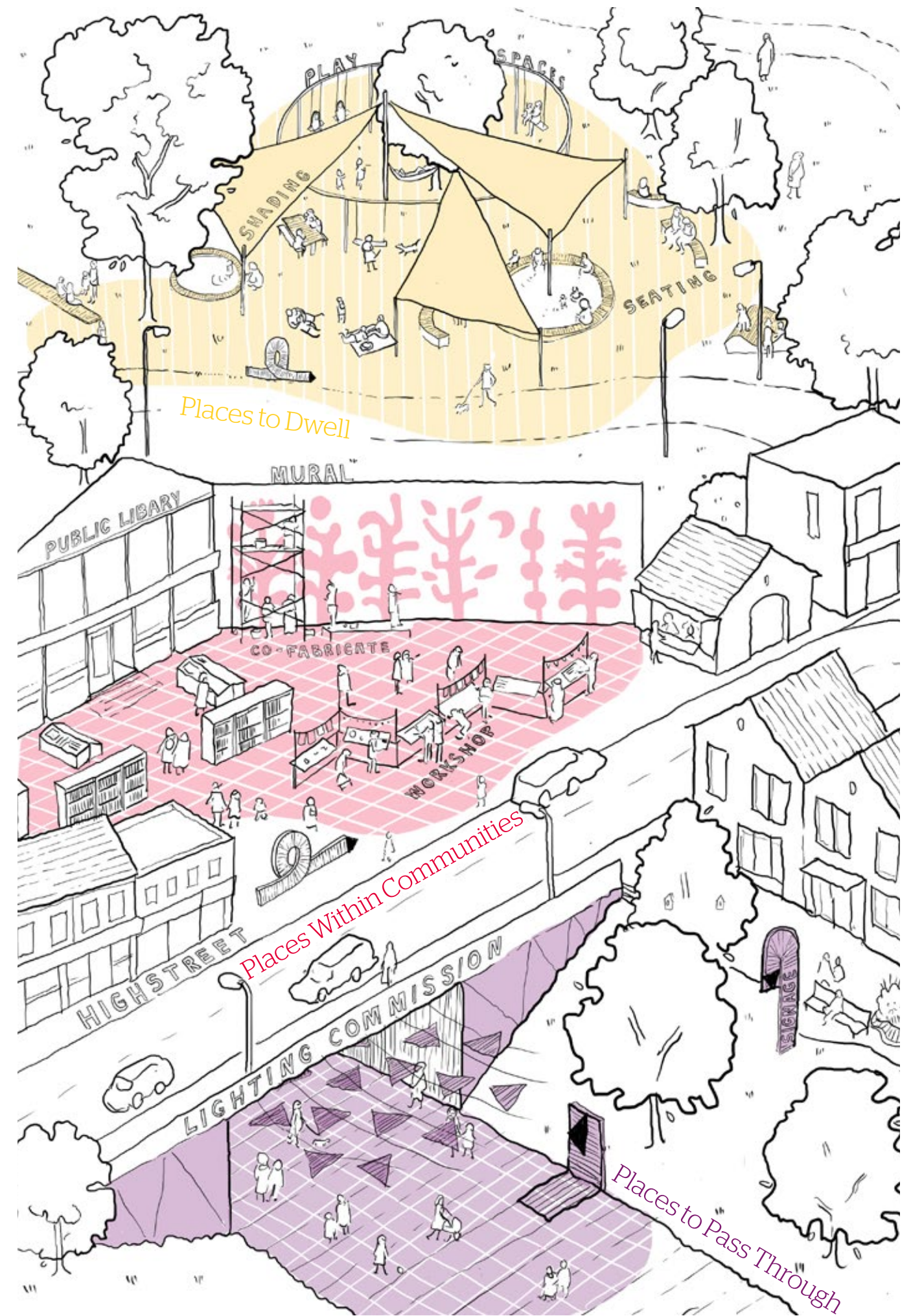
- subways, primarily under Rickmansworth Road linking the High Street and Town Hall Quarter
- St Mary's Church public realm
- empty shops / shop windows
- River Colne

Medium term:

- Victoria Passage & Alleyways
- Pond area
- Town Hall / Library area (Town Hall Quarter)
- neighbourhoods outside the town centre, including North Watford, Meriden, Holywell and Leavesden Green

Longer term:

- Croxley Rail Link
- parks and open spaces
- highlighting the architecture of the town, from historic structures to Brutalist buildings.



Delivery Plan

The ambition can be achieved through high quality design public art, meaningful community engagement and participation, and the promotion of community activity via cultural activity - with sustainability central to all of this.

This section outlines how the Strategy objectives can be delivered over the next ten years, subject to additional funding being secured. This should be seen as a framework to respond to changes in the local and national context. The actions should be reviewed after three years.



Actions



A. Improving the practice of commissioning, delivery and management of public art

A good commissioning process creates the foundation for high-quality sustainable artwork and the mechanism to create an equitable, open, transparent and enjoyable process for all involved. From the development of the brief, to undertaking an appropriate artist selection process, to identifying opportunities for public art. The Public Art Toolkit outlines best practice.

Support from within the council will help to facilitate this, by establishing a coherent framework of advice to enable commissioning of public art of high quality by public agencies and the independent and commercial development sectors. A key aim of this Strategy is to improve the quality of public art in new developments. We will undertake a comprehensive review of all new policy documents to ensure appropriate advice is provided and clarify the importance of **access, inclusion, participation and sustainability**.

Measuring success

Success will depend on improving the way public art:

- involves more diverse local artists
- reflective of the site's history, identity or people
- welcomed and visited by the community and visitors and seen to enliven the town and contribute to civic pride
- a community enthused about zero carbon and actively contributing to creating a carbon net zero town
- public space will be complemented by a strong public art agenda including adventurous and challenging works by contemporary local and international artists.

A	Actions	Lead & Partners	Timescale
1	Undertake a comprehensive review of all policy documents to ensure appropriate advice is provided and clarify the importance of quality, access, inclusion and sustainability for public art.	Watford Borough Council (WBC)	Short term 2025
2	Seek specialist advice to review relevant schemes submitted for planning to support Officers when required.	WBC	Short term 2025
4	Review current public art commissioning procurement and adopt more appropriate and equitable/accessible policy and procedures as outlined in the Toolkit.	WBC	Short term 2025
5	Develop guidance for Street Art to assist those commissioning it and planning officers. This should include procedures for obtaining planning consent and community engagement.	WBC	Medium term 2026
6	Embed the Public Art Strategy within council services (existing resource) to provide a brokering role, working between arts and development. Assist with drafting Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), Design Codes and Planning Briefs. Advise developers on local community groups, artists and arts organisations. Participate in artist selection panels. Monitor public art projects and CIL spend.	WBC; cllrs.	Medium term 2026/27



B. Support artists and collaboration. Improve residents' experience and participation

The need for cross-council and cross-sector brokerage between artists and developers early on in the planning process is key. These relationships are central to unique public art embedded in a development instead of being added on at the end or relegated to a set of gates or seating elements. Working in the public realm is not the same as working in a gallery and not all artists are interested in working in this way or know how to start. Curators and public art consultants can support artists working with commissioners, and assist those commissioning artworks in identifying appropriate artists.

Temporary projects and events allow artists to define and redefine the physical nature of a place and its impact on our senses. Encourage opportunities for temporary art to activate public spaces – across the town, inclusively. If centred around the approach of co-design and co-fabrication or development, this will enliven places, provide artists and communities with a means of defining the character of their neighbourhoods and the town as a whole. Bring people together to create and celebrate their neighbourhood, and utilise the commissioning process to discuss the nature of place and use and users: inclusion, exclusion, space for older people, space for young people etc.

We will allow for collaborative, participatory and multidisciplinary practices where appropriate. New cultural infrastructure could include pavilions and space for cultural activities, designed and built by the relevant communities. Temporary (or meanwhile) interventions can spark ideas, strike up conversations and create new spaces.

Measuring success

Success will depend on improving the way public art:

- increases engagement with communities in co-commissioning, co-curating and creating artworks
- increases engagement with the local community in informing the nature of the public art and where appropriate its creation
- supports artist-led engagement initiatives engaging with health and wellbeing, ecology and nature
- supports meaningful collaborative or participatory process and helps strengthen communities and place-shaping
- better integrates or reflects a site's history, identity or residents
- addresses sustainability principles and practices
- draws people to locations that they might not usually visit or that offer new viewpoints of the town
- is seen to enliven the town and contribute to civic pride and well received by the community and visitors

B	Actions	Lead & Partners	Timescale
1	Signposting to relevant funding	WBC, artists, cllrs, cultural and creative organisations.	Short term 2025
2	Commission three artists to create artworks at the new Watford Museum.	WBC; artists; The National Lottery Heritage Fund.	Short term 2025
3	Community commissions creating a two-year community engagement programme culminating in the creation of a series of permanent interventions across the borough – one in each ward, Community commissions decided by the community, linking across the town. Subject to funding being raised.	WBC; cllrs; artists; community orgs.; residents associations; Arts Council England (ACE)	Medium term 2026/27
4	Commission one transformational artwork - potentially a multi-use space / structure for artist/makers to show and sell their work; musicians or others to perform at; a place to meet and play; a place to sit. A new space that can be programmed. Re-imagining a key location. Subject to future funding being secured. (To be reviewed in line with Local Government reform).	WBC; Business Improvement District (BID); artists, designers, craftspeople and creatives	Long term 2032



C. Expand funding mechanisms for new public art

There are a number of major development projects identified by the council in the next ten years across the public realm, infrastructure, transport, healthcare, leisure, industrial, housing and regeneration. There is no consistent way that public art is included in new development. These actions will assist in this, but developing new and sustainable funding partnerships or mechanisms across the town and region will be required, in addition to maximising the opportunities of section 106 contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Opportunities exist to work with other arts and cultural organisations to share expertise, resources and programme ideas for funding public art projects. Recognising the pivotal role the council plays in the town's public realm, we will continue our consultative approach and work with a range of stakeholders to create experiences in the public realm based on principles of universal access and develop projects that make art available to everyone.

As a town and community, Watford could develop a mechanism to create public art funding which genuinely delivers social, cultural and environmental value, utilising funding from the publicly funded arts, health and development sectors, in addition to the private sector. This would entail creating a public art fund, which could be allocated across new public artworks, events, activities and projects and (where relevant) the ongoing maintenance of existing works. Developing a formal framework for new and alternative funding opportunities should be a priority in 2026/27. (See section 6)

Measuring success

Successful partnerships lead to successful projects, so success in working with stakeholders can be judged by:

- timely implementation of key partnership projects
- increased number of partnerships with Higher Education institutions, local schools and colleges, cultural organisations and other key stakeholders
- the implementation of universal principles to create accessible public art projects and experiences in the public realm.

C	Actions	Lead & Partners	Timescale
1	Embed the Public Art Strategy to develop a collaborative cross council approach to maximise investment where public art activities could contribute to the delivery of other services.	WBC; cllrs	Short term 2026
2	Develop a policy for all major developments to produce an arts or public art strategy, including an education element or programme. Encourage major developers such as West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (WHTHNSHT) and Watford Community Housing (WCH) to incorporate art and culture into their developments.	WBC; Watford General Hospital (WHTHNSHT), WCH	Medium term 2027
3	Explore finance opportunities and partnerships to access diverse and alternative longer-term funding for public art projects and programmes. This could include using match-funding against CIL and section 106; exploring options to create an arts, culture and heritage fund, including a budget for public art and maintenance.	WBC; cllrs.	Medium term 2028
4	Ongoing consideration of sites where new public art initiatives might take place, which could include in areas identified in the Town Plan, Area Action Plans, Public Realm SPD / Design Codes and Neighbourhood Plans.	WBC	Medium term 2028
5	Encourage partnership between academia, the cultural sector and local community organisations to deliver skills, business and entrepreneurship training to support arts and cultural organisations and the wider community to commission artworks. Establishing new relationships, bringing students and artists together and connecting graduating students with employment opportunities. (To be reviewed in line with Local Government reform).	WBC; Uni. of Herts, West Herts College, arts and community orgs, creative industries; eco/sustainability businesses; ACE, NLHF (National Lottery Heritage Fund)	Longer term 2030



D. Support opportunities for new artworks in new locations for placemaking, community cohesion and wellbeing.

Public art can emphasise and enhance the town's unique heritage, culture and natural assets and is central to good placemaking. Public art can be the mechanism to help to deliver this, with temporary projects such as art on construction hoardings, artist-led meanwhile uses, and permanent artworks integrated into the public realm potentially as functional elements such as street furniture or incidental play. Site specific SPD / Design Codes and encourage developers to maximise the social value of arts and cultural activities via a public art and/or cultural programme.

Increasingly, developers are engaging with social value and are willing to invest in initiatives that create long-term and sustainable change for good. Meaningful engagement is a two way, on-going process, which can result in informed input, a shared sense of ownership in a project and better, more inclusive outcomes. This can provide local artists and craftspeople with employment opportunities and has the potential to benefit the economy of a community, in addition to encouraging greater social cohesion. Those commissioning public art should be encouraged and to seek out local artists, fabricators and supply chain through creative involvement and co-production in the commissioning process.

Arts and culture could play a central role in animating the town centre through permanent commissions, live arts and entertainment, and the creation of new cultural spaces for artistic production and presentation. The impact of temporary projects can have significant impact on a place or a community and people's wellbeing. This can be enhanced when the community has a direct involvement in

informing or creating the artwork, participating in associated creative events or as users or audiences. If artworks are temporary and time-limited, artists can be more adventurous and innovation/experimental and decision makers/communities will worry less as it is not permanent.

Measuring success

Success will be where:

- more developers encouraged and planning policy developed to support the integration of public art / artists
- increased incorporation of public art and culture in new developments and the public realm, including meanwhile use
- enhanced quality of the public realm, including the re-use and reimagination of areas and animating of new environments
- increased support of the town's cultural and creative sector, capturing and promoting the town's creativity and personality.

D	Actions	Lead & Partners	Timescale
1	Utilise Watford's place brand narrative promoting public art installations, events and activities as part of the town's cultural offering.	WBC	Short term 2025
2	Engage with cross council departments, landowners, developers, businesses for discussions on temporary activities and interventions, including meanwhile uses. Identify sites for meanwhile uses which might be artist-led or facilitated. Ensure this aligns with Watford Place brand.	WBC; cllrs; BID,	Short term 2025
3	Identify projects and sites at an early stage where public art opportunities can be discussed with developer (pre-planning). Highlighting potential opportunities for artist-led activities throughout the design & construction process. Update existing guidance where relevant.	WBC; developers	Short term 2025
4	Identify meanwhile use sites or buildings where artists and collaborations can utilise and develop empty buildings, reclaim spaces and use for arts, creative industries and community activities for medium-long term use. Assist in brokerage if not in council ownership.	WBC; landlords; facilities management companies; BID	Medium term 2027
5	Art of the alleyway responding to the history of the sites, their ecology, economy, and communities, this programme could help to create a sense of fun and the unexpected for residents and visitors alike. A series of brief annual artist residencies in the alleyways, both temporary and permanent. Aligned to Town Centre Framework activity. Subject to funding being secured. (To be reviewed in line with Local Government reform).	WBC; artists; community organisations; ACE; communities, BID	Longer term 2032



E. Improve the awareness and experience of the town's public art

Many residents have a strong attachment to the artworks in the town's public spaces. The preservation of these works, in situ and in the memory and consciousness of residents and visitors, is of great importance to the council. Our public art collection includes all new permanent and temporary works commissioned by the council. This is augmented by public art commissioned by others through s106, CIL or other processes and is the responsibility of the commissioner/land/site/building owners.

Managing the collection includes monitoring and assessing artworks to ensure that conservation, maintenance and repairs are carried out as funding allows. Our policy guidelines and public art processes should be reviewed in order to maintain the collection in a culturally and environmentally sustainable manner. The original context of an artwork can lose its relevance over time and the relocation, decommissioning or removal of an artwork should be considered if the work is no longer as the artist intended, has health and safety implications or has reached the end of its design life.

Key to the success of a public art programme is its successful promotion to residents, workers and visitors. There is a need to encourage creativity for young people through the arts and other creative processes by highlighting the freely accessible art in the public realm and the potential to participate in creating more, the town really can become a gallery.

Our website can provide more opportunities and ways to experience the town and its public art, including providing a better experience with high quality resources and technology.

Measuring success

Success in conserving and managing and promoting the council's public art collection will be measured by:

- reducing maintenance needs by restoring heritage items in a way that ensures their preservation into the future
- collecting more detailed information on artworks and making this available to the public on our website
- increased interest in public art
- increasing the availability and use of resources and in the popularity of walking and cycling tours, artist-led tours and trails.

E	Actions	Lead & Partners	Timescale
1	Provide information, resources and training for elected members Provide training on the Public Art Commissioning Toolkit, including site visits. Utilise the public art audit as a resource.	WBC; cllrs.	Short term 2025
2	Utilise the information from the audit of Watford's public artworks and make it available online. Create a WBC website page with information about public art.	WBC	Short term 2025
3	Initiate and implement programmes to communicate, educate and engage people about public art in the town. Encourage others to give tours and explore what exists, make the collection very alive and the conversation with the town and its residents on-going.	WBC; arts organisations, communities, cllrs.; cultural forum	Medium term 2027
4	Develop new interpretation material for existing artworks with innovative digital media technology in partnership with local creative industries – e.g. Apps, printed trails etc. Encourage artists, arts organisations and commercial organisations to give walking tours. Subject to funding being raised. (To be reviewed in line with Local Government reform)	West Herts College; WBC; University of Hertfordshire; creative industries	Longer term 2038

F. Testing the toolkit and embedding best practice processes

To test the toolkit and associated best practice, it is proposed that a pilot public art project be identified and delivered.

The consultation identified a number of locations where people would like to see new public art. This might be a permanent or temporary commission or a combination of them both, but participation and engagement will be central to the process. The artists' brief/s will be developed with guidance from the Community Steering Group and the Arts Development Officers.

Pilot location:

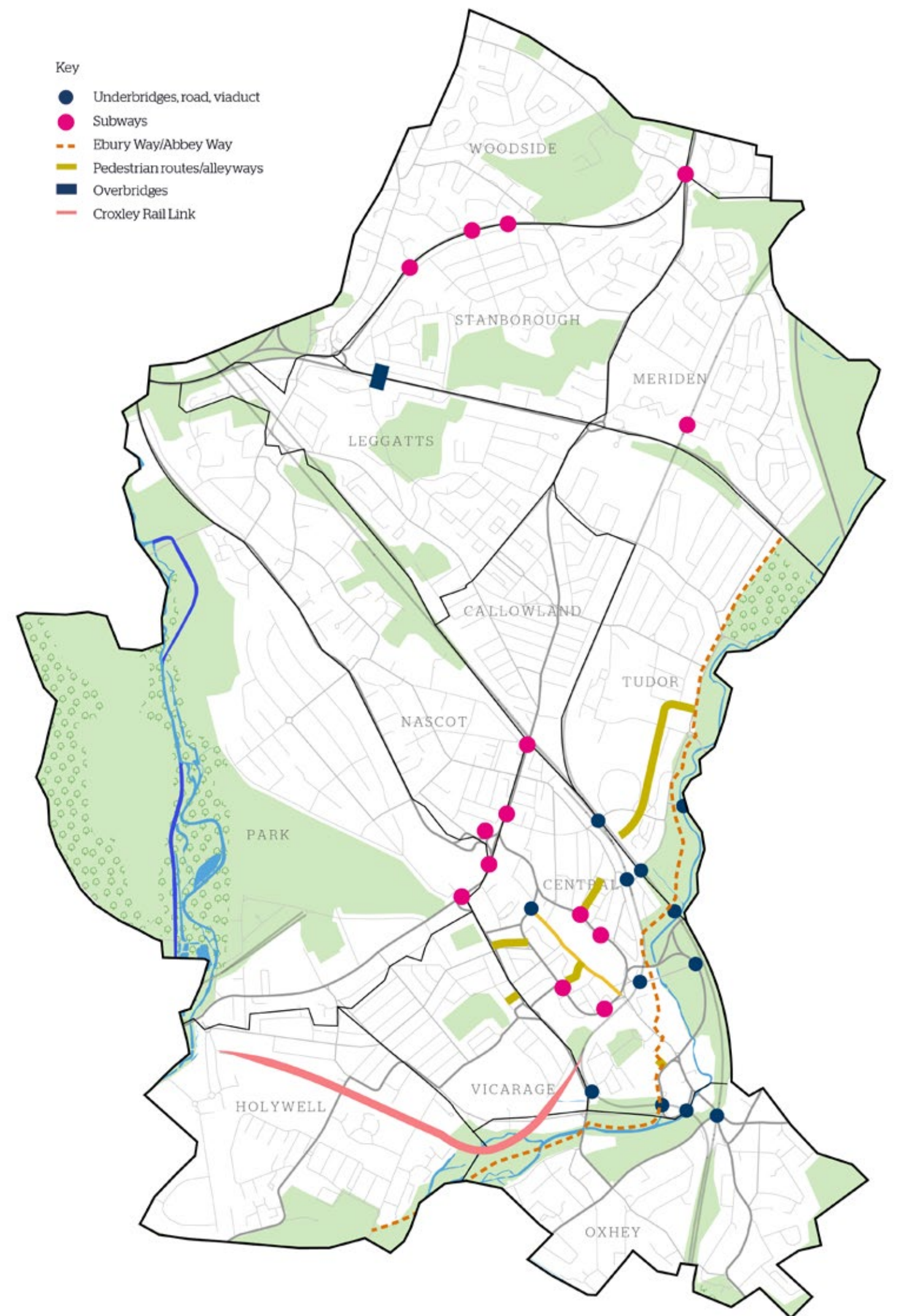
- West Watford Community Centre
- Nascot Wood Sculpture
- River Colne

Measuring success

Success for new commission will be measured by:

- embedded skills and processes within the council
- enhanced commissioning experience for artists
- exciting and engaging participatory experience for those involved in devising or creating the artwork
- increased footfall/dwell time etc. to visit the artwork/s.

F	Actions	Lead & Partners	Timescale
1	Pilot artwork to test the toolkit and embed best practice. Potential to include skills development.	WBC; Community artists; community; ACE	Short term 2025
2	Recording & Evaluation of the commissioning process and final artwork. Photographed and recorded to add to the website.	WBC	Short term 2025



Funding for delivery

Public art in Watford is currently facilitated in three ways:

- via the statutory planning process (s106 or CIL elements, often small scale and permanent)
- commissioned by individuals, organisations, businesses or crowdfunding, and by the council (larger, more civic work)
- artists getting on and creating art, from street art, film and digital work, and quiet interventions and subversions (often temporary)

Public art sits across different sectors and activities within the town; there are areas of overlap and opportunity, and potential for collaborations and partnerships. The council's remit is the delivery of core services. Culture and public art are not core services, therefore, the council's budget is extremely limited. The financial position is more challenging than ever before. High quality requires appropriate budgets, careful management and realistic timescales. Less can be more.

We have identified major development projects due to complete in the next decade across the public realm, infrastructure, transport, healthcare, leisure, industrial, housing and regeneration areas. We will introduce a consistent way in which public art is included in new developments, maximising opportunities from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). New and sustainable funding partnerships or mechanisms across the borough and wider will be required.

We can look to integrate public art into other council service delivery, for example to increase overall wellbeing in the town with permanent

and temporary interventions. Our programme will support a culture of health by bringing social prescribing to the whole town, creating safe and inclusive ways for people to discover, explore and assert their identities. We can enrich people's lives with access to cultural activities across the full spectrum of health and emotional wellbeing.

Those undertaking major projects such as Watford Community Housing and West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, will be encouraged to consider integrating public art into their new developments, as part of sustainable neighbourhoods, as interactive play, meeting places, functional street furniture, art on hoardings, interior focal points, wayfinding etc.

Alongside our existing public and commercial partnerships, we can assist arts and cultural organisations to submit funding applications to local and national trusts and foundations. To support artists/skills development and our research and evaluation work, we will work with partners at West Herts. College and the University of Hertfordshire.



Appendix

Glossary

ACE	Arts Council England. The national arts & museums’ funding body.
Activist art	Activist art is a term used to describe art that is grounded in the act of ‘doing’ and addresses political or social issues.
Art	The term ‘art’ is defined as the product of practitioners who intend their work and activities to be seen and read as art. It embraces material and immaterial products and concepts from the imaginative and creative thinking of artists.
Art intervention	Applies to art designed specifically to interact with an existing structure or situation, be it another artwork, the audience, an institution or in the public realm.
Belonging	To feel accepted and comfortable in a setting. To feel accepted and comfortable in a setting despite age, physical or mental ability, gender, race, sexuality or income.
A Sustainable Town, Watford Local Plan 2021-2038	The primary spatial planning document for Watford, outlining core development areas (Watford Gateway, Town Centre, Colne Valley); housing provision; employment; retail; design quality; heritage environment, the Climate Emergency; conservation; infrastructure; transport; health and site allocations and developments.
BID	Business Improvement District. Watford Town Centre.
Building for a Healthy Life / Building for Life	Building for a Healthy Life is the latest edition of – and new name for – Building for Life 12. Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) updates England’s most widely known and most widely used design tool for creating places that are better for people and nature. https://www.designforhomes.org/project/building-for-life/
Carbon Neutral (or net zero carbon)	To not cause an increase in greenhouse gas emissions by reducing and avoiding emissions and balancing out, capturing or offsetting those that cannot be avoided.
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy: a tax on development levied by the local authority to be used to fund ‘the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area’. There is a neighbourhood element of CIL (Neighbourhood CIL or NCIL) which is expected to be focussed on the area in which the development happens but can be borough wide.
Circular economy	Designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials circulating within the economy at their highest value for as long as possible, and allowing natural systems to regenerate; the opposite of a ‘take-make-use-dispose’ linear economy. At its core, a circular economy model has the intention of designing out waste. In fact, a circular economy is based on the idea that there is no such thing as waste. In order to achieve this, products are designed to last (good quality materials are used) and optimized for a cycle of disassembly and reuse that will make it easier to handle and transform or renew them. It is based on three principles: reduce, reuse, recycle.

Circular construction	Circular construction is defined as the development, use and reuse of buildings, areas and infrastructure without unnecessarily exhausting natural resources, polluting the living environment, and affecting ecosystems.
Co-creation	Co-creation is a process of designing a project with artists and organisations both having an input. For example a transport company working with an artist to produce art on buses, with both having an influence on the outcome.
Co-design	Co-design is a way of designing with people instead of designing for people, by involving them in an active and ongoing way. With an equal role in steering the direction of the project. The cultural co-design model is an asset-based approach to engaging communities with arts and culture through which local people worked with skilled producers and professional artists and make use of local assets – people, places and resources.
Commission	A commission is a request for an artwork to be created on behalf of organisations (for example, the government, private trusts or businesses).
Community	Community for projects can refer to a geographic community, where people live or work or study within the boundaries or might include active citizens such as members of a community group. Or it can refer to a group of individuals who have a particular characteristic in common. Or having certain attitudes and interests in common.
Community art	Community art is artistic activity that is based in a community setting, characterised by interaction or dialogue with the community and often involving a professional artist collaborating with people who may not otherwise engage in the arts.
Community cohesion	A sense of belonging for all communities, with connections and trust between them. Diversity is valued and people of different backgrounds have the opportunity to develop positive relationships with one another.
Cultural infrastructure	The buildings, structures and places where culture is experienced, participated in, showcased, exhibited or sold. For example, museums, galleries, theatres, cinemas, libraries, music venues and historic cultural sites. Or places where art is produced: places of creative production, where work is made, usually by artists, performers, makers, manufacturers or digital processes. For example creative workspaces, performing arts rehearsal spaces, music recording studios, film and television studios and industrial and light industrial units used by creative and cultural businesses.
Creative innovation	Nurturing ingenuity in problem solving and intervention.

Cultural heritage	Cultural heritage exists in tangible, intangible and digital forms. Tangible heritage includes artefacts (for example, objects, paintings, archaeological finds), buildings, structures, landscapes, cities, and towns including industrial, underwater and archaeological sites. It includes their location, relationship to the natural environment and the materials from which all these are made, from prehistoric rock to cutting edge plastics and electronic products. Intangible heritage includes the practices, representations, expressions, memories, knowledge and skills that communities, groups and individuals construct, use and transmit from generation to generation. Digital heritage includes texts, databases, still and moving images, audio, graphics, software and web pages.
Cultural Infrastructure Plan	The action plan developed from the mapping and analysis of existing and required cultural infrastructure in a town, borough or city, identifying gaps and future needs, and exploring the ways that the planning system can help to address these gaps and needs in future. (See: https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/cultural-infrastructure-toolbox)
Design and Access Statement	Design & Access Statement (DAS): is a short report accompanying and supporting a planning application. They provide a framework for applicants to explain how a proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users. A DAS is required with planning applications for major development – both full and outline and Listed building consent applications.
Design code	A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design/development framework for an area or site. An exception is for an Authority Design Code covering a wider area.
Design guide	A document providing guidance on how a development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice, produced by the council.
Digital Art	Digital art is a term used to describe art that is made or presented using digital technology.
Environmental art	Environmental art is art that addresses social and political issues relating to the natural and urban environment.
Equality	Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. (Equality and Human Rights Commission)
Equity	Equity recognises historical and contemporary oppression and acknowledges that different communities require different types and levels of support to succeed and survive. To achieve equity, policies and procedures may require unequal distribution of resources to redress disparities and disadvantages and achieve equal outcomes.

Gatekeeper	Gatekeepers are people or organisations who have more control and leadership, with the power to limit who can access and enjoy art. They can look like funders, policymakers, politicians and commissioners.
Green corridor	Uninterrupted network of natural features within an urban area that acts as a linkage for wildlife, and potentially for people.
Hoarding	Hoardings are structures alongside a public footpath or road that provide side protection for pedestrians and road users and are required to secure construction worksites.
Inclusion	The acceptance of difference and the intention to involve diverse opinions and behaviours.
Inclusive	Making a place which everyone can use with comfort, dignity and convenience, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disabilities or circumstances.
Installation art	The term installation art is used to describe large-scale, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place and/or for a temporary period of time.
Land Art	Land art or earth art is art that is made directly in the landscape, sculpting the land itself into earthworks or making structures in the landscape using natural materials such as rocks or twigs.
Legibility	How easy it is for people to understand and find their way around a place and how memorable it is.
Localised consultancy	Consultancy is a person or organisation who gives advice to help inform projects or initiatives. 'Localised' consultancy focuses on the people with lived experience in local communities.
The National Design Guide	The Guide addresses the question of how we recognise well-designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government's priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics.
PAN	Planning Advice Note, which provide technical information, best practice and clarify planning issues on certain subjects.
Participatory art	A term that describes a form of art that directly engages the audience in the creative process so that they become participants in the artwork.
Percent for art	Percent for Art is an effective, widely recognised funding mechanism whereby one or more percent of the total costs of capital development, refurbishment and urban design schemes, infrastructure, transport and landscape / environmental projects is allocated to commissioning new work by living artists. It can fund the commissioning of temporary as well as permanent artworks. The Percent for Art principle has been adopted widely in Europe, Australia and the US to fund many of the important commissions and collections of public art, generally at a level of 1% or 1.5% level, but in some cases 2% or higher.

Performance art	Artworks that are created through actions performed by the artist or other participants, which may be live or recorded, spontaneous or scripted.
Placemaking	Placemaking is a process of using a local community's identity to help create something public (for example, public art) that engages with people in shared spaces, their wellbeing, health, and happiness.
Producer	A cultural producer is the person who oversees and manages the delivery of arts and cultural projects and programmes, often working alongside a curator. They may be public art or cultural consultants.
Public art	The term 'public art' is defined in the broadest sense as artistic works or activities accessible to the public. The work may be of a temporary or permanent nature. Located in or part of a public space or infrastructure or facility provided by both the public and private sector, public art and the conceptual contribution of an artist to the design of public spaces and facilities.
Public realm	The term 'public realm' is commonly defined as any space that is free and open to everyone. This includes the space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible, streets, squares, parks and open spaces such as the rivers or canal. But also includes space within public buildings (stations, libraries, civic buildings) or public spaces (entrance foyer, public areas) of private buildings.
Sculpture	Three-dimensional art made by one of four basic processes: carving, modelling, casting or constructing.
Site-specific	The term site-specific refers to a work of art designed specifically for a particular location and that has an interrelationship with the location.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document. Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design.
s106 funding	Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act. Provides for planning obligations on developers to 'make the development acceptable in planning terms' i.e. to mitigate its impact.
Stakeholder	A stakeholder has an interest in a company, project, or organisation. Typically, stakeholders are investors (the people or organisations who provide funding), but could also take the form of employees, suppliers, and participants.
Social capital	The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.
Social engaged practice	Socially engaged practice describes art that is collaborative, often participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work.
Social value	Social value refers to the benefits that an organisation can deliver to society through its activities and supply chain.

Sound art	Art which uses sound both as its medium (what it is made out of) and as its subject (what it is about).
Zero carbon	An activity, product, organisation, town, city, country etc. which does not emit any greenhouse gas emissions

Image Credits

Cover: Puppets with Guts, The Lips, performance at outdoor arts festival Imagine Watford, programmed by Watford Palace Theatre, 2019. Photo: Aleksandra Warchol Photography;

Page 5: Neighbourhood exchange workshop at Leavesden Green Community Hub, Watford, run by artist Abigail Hunt in January 2023. Photo: Abigail Hunt;

Page 7: Images L to R: Katharina Grosse, Just Two of Us, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Johann König, Berlin. Photo: James Ewing, courtesy Public Art Fund, NY. Presented by Public Art Fund at MetroTech Commons, Downtown Brooklyn, 27 October 2013-14 September 2014. 18 irregularly shaped sculptures in technicolour creating intrigue and transforming a New York plaza;

Amy Pennington, 14 Days of Washing Up, 2017. Photo: Fiona MacDonald. Commissioned by Tideway for Art on the Tideway. Performance by Amy Pennington on Putney Embankment, London, involving items collected during mudlarking sessions with local residents.

Bill Culbert, Lustre, 2004, permanent neon installation at Watford Palace Theatre. Photo: Bridget Sawyers Limited;

Puppets with Guts, The Lips, performance at outdoor arts festival Imagine Watford, programmed by Watford Palace Theatre, 2019. Photo: Aleksandra Warchol Photography;

Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan, The Institute For The Magical Effect Of Actually Giving A Shit (a note to our future self), 2021. A Studio Voltaire commission. Image courtesy of the Artists and The Modern Institute, Glasgow. Photo: Francis Ware. Permanent commission as part of The Studio Voltaire Capital Project;

Page 8: Images L to R: Neighbourhood exchange workshop at Leavesden Green Community Hub, run by artist Abigail Hunt in January 2023. Photo: Yousra Houmid El Amrani

Henry Krokatsis, Turning Tree, 2015, Ladywell Fields, commissioned by UP Projects in partnership with Lewisham Council. Photo: Hydar Dewachi. A kinetic artwork cast from a section of a fallen Black Poplar tree found in Ladywell Fields, Lewisham. Part of Secret Garden Project curated and commissioned by UP Projects in partnership with Lewisham Council and supported by Arts Council England.

Compagnie Didier Theron, Gonfles – La Grand Phrase, performance at outdoor arts festival Imagine Watford, 2019, programmed by Watford Palace Theatre. Photo: Aleksandra Warchol Photography;

Pilar Quinteros, Janus Fortress: Folkestone, 2021. Co-commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021 by Creative Folkestone and England's Creative Coast. Photo: Thierry Bal. A two-faced head depicting the god of beginnings, gates, transitions, time, duality, doorways, passages, frames and endings. Quinteros' sculpture looks inland and out to sea in Folkestone.

Image Credits (continued)

Lakwena Maciver, Back in the Air: A Meditation on Higher Ground, 2022. Photo: Bridget Sawyers Limited. A pattern of vivid, interlocking tiles for Temple Station's rooftop garden, London. Commissioned by theCoLAB;

Page 11: SUPERFLEX, Superkilen, 2012. Designed in collaboration with BIG and Topotek1. Commissioned by the City of Copenhagen and Realdania, Denmark. Street furniture from 60 different nations that stretches 750 metres through Copenhagen's Nørrebro neighbourhood;

Page 13: map designed by Eleanor Hill;

Page 14: Neighbourhood exchange workshop at Meriden Community Centre, Watford, run by artist Hayley Harrison in December 2022. Photo: Yousra Houmid El Amrani;

Page 17: Daniel Buren, Les Deux Plateau, Palais Royal, Paris, 1986. Photo: Bridget Sawyers Limited. Buren's first public art project, located in the inner courtyard of the Palais Royal;

Page 19: illustration by Eleanor Hill;

Page 21: Awol Erizku, New Visions for Iris, 2021, 632, 2020E, Randolph St. & N Stetson Ave., Chicago. Courtesy the artist. Photo: David C. Sampson, Courtesy of Public Art Fund, NY. Photographic work a part of Awol Erizku: New Visions for Iris, presented by Public Art Fund on 350 JCDecaux bus shelters across New York City and Chicago, 24 February–20 June 2021;

Page 33: map designed by Eleanor Hill;

Page 35: Mohamed Bourouissa, Resilience Garden, 2018. Photo: Peter Carr. A garden created with local people, gardeners, school pupils, teachers and artists as part of the Liverpool Biennial;

Bharti Kher, Ancestor, 2022. Courtesy the artist; Hauser & Wirth; Perrotin; Nature Morte, New Delhi; and is in the collection of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi. Photo: Nicholas Knight, Courtesy of Public Art Fund, NY. Presented by Public Art Fund at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, New York City, 8 September 2022– 27 August 2023. An alternative form of monument. Based on miniature clay figurines found in a flea market in India and reassembled;

Tomás Saraceno, Maratus speciosus, Augmented Reality, 2021. Courtesy Tomás Saraceno and Acute Art. An Augmented Reality spider to raise awareness of biodiversity in the age of global warming;

Jeppe Hein, Modified Social Bench, 2015. Photo: Bridget Sawyers Limited. Part of a series of benches created by the artists to promote play and conversation, Southbank London;

Impulse – Luminotherapie 2015, CS Design and Etienne de Massy (photographer). A public art installation comprised of 30 completely illuminated seesaws and a series of video-projections on nearby building facades. Commissioned by the Partenariat du Quartier des Spectacles, Montreal, 2015. When the seesaws are used they are 'activated' and begin to emit tones resulting in various musical harmonies;



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