

Public Art Common Fund ‘Genius Loci’ – update at December 2007

Essex was the first County Council to develop and adopt the principle of a public art policy in the late 1980's and the first to receive an RSA Art & Architecture Award. The approach has been enshrined in policy with ECC making its first Cabinet Decision in 2002 allocating up to 1% of the Capital Programme for public art in relation to the 2004/5 capital programme. Approval has now been granted to switch to a central budgeting process resulting in a 'Public Art Common Fund'.

The Common Fund project schedule has a capital spend of £2.14m over the financial years 2007/8 to 2009/10 and represents 0.74% of relevant capital spend within the policy guideline.

A three year public art programme has now been implemented titled as 'Genius Loci' or spirit of place and forms part of our strategy to enhance and improve the image of the County of Essex nationally and internationally, as an exciting, forward looking and inspiring location.

Aims

The Common Fund aims to deliver a three-year public art programme linked to ECC's Major Capital Development schemes and will play an integral part of the Essex Design Initiative (EDI). The programme is a key priority in ensuring that artists are part of design teams, providing an artistic dimension and enhancement of all building projects and environmental improvement schemes, public or private, within the County; the aim being to enhance the visual richness of buildings, roads, landscaping and ultimately, the image of Essex.

In addition the programme will also deliver the EDI's core aims:

- to promote a vision for sustainable development that is relevant to Essex
- to achieve higher quality (design, management and maintenance)
- to increase design skills within Local Authorities and the development industry

Programme of Schemes

The programme is appointing ten Lead Artists to work on the following schemes:-

Harlow - Lead artist Roman Vasseur

The Government has proposed substantial growth of housing and employment in Harlow through the East of England Plan. Harlow is defined as a Key Centre for Development and Change in the draft East of England Plan, with the construction of approximately 16,000 new dwellings proposed by 2021. This will significantly increase the catchment area and enhance the housing mix. The proposed growth provides an excellent opportunity to bring together partners from the public and private sectors to invest in Harlow, ensuring it takes its rightful place as a town of regional significance.

Harlow Renaissance and its founding member organisations are seeking to appoint a preferred developer partner to undertake the redevelopment of Market Square and surrounding areas of the town centre. This will include a wide range of uses, both commercial, public and residential within a new high quality urban design context.

Harlow has a long term commitment to the commissioning of artists linked to the town's urban infrastructure, and this will be continued in this development through the appointment of a lead artist to the design team.

It is anticipated that the involvement of an artist at an early stage in the design process will ensure complete integration into the scheme as opposed to being an afterthought. The role of the artist relates to the strategic inclusion of public art into the ongoing design development and it is intended to ensure this takes place through the early appointment of the Artist, and their involvement in the selection of developers.

The involvement of local people and users in the development of the scheme is seen as important, as are its connections with local arts and civic organisations such as Harlow Arts Trust, Harlow Civic Society and the Museum of Harlow. The planning and delivery of a programme of debate and temporary interventions are seen as an important part of this process.

The project which will be managed by a project steering group and will be the subject of a comprehensive evaluation process which will be used to promote the benefits of this approach as a model of good practice.

Sadlers Farm A13/A130 Transportation Upgrade - Lead artist Nayan Kulkarni

Having produced a feasibility study relating to the commissioning of artists alongside highway development in the county, the improvement scheme at Sadlers Farm was identified as presenting a major opportunity for commissioning of an integrated public arts project by an artist.

The A13/A130 Sadlers Farm Junction forms part of the strategic highway networks serving the Essex Thames Gateway (ETG). The existing junction is currently subject to severe congestion and the planned development in the ETG, would further increase the traffic demand.

Further information regarding the scheme is presented in the report “Thames Gateway Strategic Network Improvements, A13/A130 Sadlers Farm Junction, Major Scheme Business Case” by Mouchel Parkman dated July 2005. Sadlers Farm is a place at which roads from the North, South, East and West meet. The vision for this project is to create a distinct ‘place’ which is set apart and made more visible through high quality design, engineering and art.

It is anticipated that the involvement of an artist at an early stage in the design process will ensure complete integration into the scheme as opposed to being an afterthought.

The identification of appropriate opportunities will be an important part of the design development process. Areas for consideration might include contributions to the landscape, cuttings, bridge structures as well as cycle and pedestrian links.

The role of the artist relates to working as an integral part of the design team to provide the strategic inclusion of Public Art in the ongoing design development.

The artistic elements of the scheme, which will be managed by Essex County Council and Commissions East as part of the overall project, will be the subject of a comprehensive evaluation process which will be used to promote the benefits of this approach to other highway schemes.

It is intended that this project will form a benchmark for the integration of major commissions within future road infrastructure works in Essex.

Ramsden Hall School - Lead artist Ray Smith

The lead artist has been employed to work with the students and staff of Ramsden Hall School and the project design team in developing proposals for the integration of permanent artwork into the architecture and grounds of the new school improvements.

Ramsden Hall is a residential and day school that caters for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The school admits boys aged between eleven and fifteen who are experiencing difficulties with their learning in other schools and seeks to help those pupils who are presenting emotional and behavioural problems that are seriously affecting their education.

Key to the school's philosophy is to help to improve those pupils' life chances and the main aim of the school is to return the boys back into the community with a greater understanding of the world and themselves in order that they may take their rightful place in society and gain useful and rewarding employment.

Colchester Turner Village Primary School - Lead artist Bruce Williams

The aim of the Project is to integrate visual arts/crafts into the architecture and grounds of a new school build, thereby enhancing the environment and raising the aspiration of pupils, staff and others working in and visiting the school.

The new school has an initial allocation of 210 places with a view to expanding to 330 places as a later phase. A consultation head teacher is in place. The school is part of a wider new housing development in North Colchester with plans for a new link road and roundabout.

The project is at early developmental stage with the architect keen to develop the outdoor play and learning space of the school, consider habitat and environmental issues, types of materials used, the acoustic possibilities, re-cycle elements, how quiet spaces are accessed, provision for good ball space and shady areas.

The site is narrow and has a steepness to it and the new school must provide some multi-use for the community. The overall aim of the project though is to provide an efficient, effective and inspiring learning environment which fits well into the designated site and surrounding new community.

Colchester Turner Village Primary School – cont.

The design team has been asked to pay particular attention to sustainability issues by using reclaimed and/or recycled materials including those from sustainable and local sources; minimisation of construction waste; low energy consumption with emphasis on energy conservation/efficiency/natural ventilation & daylight etc; the use of renewable energy sources e.g. solar energy to assist in providing re-using heating and rainwater collection systems. A fundamental part of the project is to achieve a 'Very Good' rating for BREEAM, a rating that reflects the 'green' credentials of the building.

Epping Primary School - Lead artist Andrew Mckeown

The new school will be an amalgamation of the current Epping Infant and Epping Junior Schools and will provide 420 places. It will be built on the current Epping Infant school site, the existing buildings being demolished in late October 2007 and the Infants decanted into accommodation next to the Junior School for the length of the build. Both current head teachers envisage the role of the artist assisting in the joining together of the two schools. They see the process as a journey from old to new and working collaboratively with an artist would be beneficial to all concerned. The overall aim of the project is to provide an efficient, effective and inspiring learning environment which fits well into the designated green belt site and surrounding community.

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Flitch Green Primary School - Lead artist Jacqui Poncelet

The new school will initially provide 210 places but is being designed with scope to expand to 330 places at a later phase. The aim is to provide an efficient, effective and inspiring learning environment which fits well into the newly developing site and surrounding community.

The school site is situated within an entirely new development of housing located on the former site of a Sugar beat factory and it's associated settlement ponds. The housing has been developing over several years and has now triggered the need to implement the local amenities for the area as designated by the planning conditions. One of the key areas of this is the school and associated community facilities. The actual area designated for the school is a 'brown field' site with many issues regarding ground contamination and make up that will have a fundamental influence on the location of the school and treatment of the site in regard to design and site management.

New Park & Ride Schemes - Lead artist Michael Pinsky

A series of Park & Rides are proposed on the periphery of Chelmsford and Colchester towns as a means of reducing town centre congestion and improving accessibility and sustainability. A Lead Artist has been commissioned to integrate artwork within the new developments for it to be viewed as a network of facilities in order to provide consistency and clarity.

The Park & Rides will feature:

- Secure car parking for 600 vehicles with the potential to expand to 1,000 spaces. This includes parking for the disabled and families.
- Cycle parking facilities
- A bus terminus building with a high quality public waiting area, washrooms, staff and bus driver facilities

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The Fryerns & Craylands Estate, Basildon – Lead artists The People Speak

The Fryerns and Craylands areas are historically separated by physical and emotional boundaries. The schemes' aim is to develop a Multi Neighbourhood Centre within the central area between the estates containing shops, new houses, adult education building, health centre, cafes, play spaces, public shared spaces, green links, new roads and thus allow the community to enliven the cross over points and improve their well being and environment. ECC is already working with English Partnership and R.S.L, a social housing developer, on this scheme.

Finance: £200 million for housing, £40 million subsidy and £6.5 million for Multi Neighbourhood Centre.

The aim is to appoint a lead artist to inform development control negotiations on the appearance and function of public art within the Basildon regeneration vision and to provide a strategic vision that will result in the implementation of high quality artworks that are synchronised with the development programme. The role of the lead artist will be to create a cohesive, enjoyable and visually stimulating environment, providing creative opportunities for people to become involved in shaping their environments.

Brentwood Town Centre Enhancement Scheme – Lead artist Michael Johnson

The Brentwood High Street commission is within an extensive £5.4 million program of upgrading the streetscape, presenting the opportunity for an artist to integrate artistic solutions into its refurbishment.

The ethos of the project is that Brentwood High Street will become a shared space scheme a first in Essex, which will remove current infrastructure and provide opportunities for creative solutions to street furniture, lighting, materials used, how to improve the living working space of the high street and still incorporate traditional activities such as 'Brentwood in Bloom' in exciting ways.

The High Street will remain as a two-way road with a newly designed shared surface, breaking traditional boundaries between carriageway and footway along the central section of the high street. This will encourage people to drive with more care and at slower speeds, allowing more pedestrians to move freely. The improvements will also include a 'Greening the Street' approach to make the high street more environmentally friendly and increase shop vitality.

Essex County Council believes streets to be the principal component of the urban spatial system and should be vibrant places that encourage people to be outside, to feel comfortable and safe.

Arcadia Revisited : Jaywick Martello Tower

Artists – David Cotterrell & Alex Murdin

Project managed by LANS

Arcadia Revisited: a creative-led process that explores the notions of arcadia in relation to coastal leisure and tourism to help capture the Genius loci, sense of place, to directly inform the future redevelopment of the area through the development of new methodologies and resulting partnership structures.

Arcadia Revisited

This project is set about into two stages with a very pivotal role in the middle that will shape the methodology for analysis and visioning for future developments taking into account the valuable social and physical heritage of an area. As a cross-disciplinary project, the resulting partnership framework that is established through creative participation, as well as the resulting methodologies, will inform future practise in the redevelopment of coastal areas. As coastal areas continue to reshape due to climate change and flood risk assessments dictate redevelopment, this project will also look at how arts-environment research and visioning may engage with coastal erosion as a co-designer in new leisure and tourist landscapes. The stages of gathering and looking forward will inform both Jaywick's future landscape and potential approaches for redevelopment of other coastal communities.

This process looks at how to capture and package the organic concept of 'sense of place' into a tangible product. Urban designers and planners have to address the often emotionally charged notion of 'sense of place' through the reality of physical infrastructure alone. *Arcadia Revisited* will help facilitate the interface offering a feasibility study approach that will lead towards an informed masterplanning process, inclusive of social heritage.

The non-plan process (residential development that is outside the formal local authority local planning frameworks), by default, has created a strong social cohesive element within its community—an inward-looking asset as developed through the national model of 'neighbourhood renewal.' *Arcadia Revisited* will explore news methods of measuring this asset in terms of capturing the 'social capital' and 'bridging capital.'

Gateway 1, Major Strategic Commission – lead artist to be appointed

Essex County Council commissioned a report by CBAT in 2005 (ref: Public Art in the Transportation Systems of Essex County Council | CBAT | 2005) to survey suitable locations for a major gateway to the County. They have suggested a variety of possible locations, these being

- 1. M 11 junction 8**
- 2. M25 Junction 27 with A127**
- 3. M 25 Junction 28 with A12**
- 4. M25 Junction 30/31 with A13**
- 5. Sadlers Farm new carriageway**
- 6. A120 junction with A12 at Colchester**
- 7. Harwich Port and Bathside Bay.**

The aim of the Public Art Strategy Group is to investigate these possible locations as a future suitable site for a major gateway to Essex, then carry out our normal commissioning procedure for a lead artist.

Public Space Programme

At the centre of the main capital projects will be a Public Space Programme. This programme consists of a series of temporary interventions located near to main project areas to explore Genius Loci in its broadest sense. The programme will challenge the traditional role of public art to encourage new levels of debate about art in the public realm, particularly within accessible public space.

The programme will be launched twice over the three year programme, the first as part of a series of talks highlighting the Genius Loci of areas whose historical connections mirror the artists/speakers own work and influences, the use of exemplary case studies will form part of this. The second will launch a line up of inspirational speakers in critical debate with the aim of enhancing visual awareness in others and highlighting contemporary art issues to ensure good design is at the forefront of urban regeneration initiatives.

The overall programme will provide opportunities for interested parties to observe, work with and gain insight into the process and execution of work by leading contemporary artists.

Creative Professional Development

A support programme to aid Creative Artistic Development is being developed to allow the lead artists to keep an electronic sketchbook to share the highs and lows of the creative process involved in the development of the commissioned piece of artwork.

The artists will be able to communicate with one another via this informal format and build a resource of the processes they each go through, offering support, guidance and celebration of the discoveries along the way.

This will provide the opportunity for the artists to involve themselves in their own creative professional development and those of their peers.

Project Objectives

- To commission work which will allow new dialogue for art in the public realm to be applied in a new way and in new contexts.
- To champion new activity and increase access to design excellence
- To ensure input from an artist at an early stage and include the artists as a full member of the design team, equal to other design professionals
- To include identified sectors of the community in the project by means of information, engagement, consultation or participation.
- To raise levels of debate about art in the public realm
- To offer time, space and support for Artists Professional Development
- To pay particular attention to sustainability issues in the design process

Contact for further information :

Isabelle Lines-Slatton

Public Art Manager
Essex County Council, Built Environment Branch
Direct line 01245 437521
Email: iLines@essexcc.gov.uk

Gavin Hodson Public Art Officer

Built Environment Branch
County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1QH
Tel: 01245 436553
Mobile: 07825144520
Fax: 01245 437697
Email: gavin.hodson@essexcc.gov.uk