

# Strategic Review of Public Realm Planting

October 2017



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# Review Objective

The council is reviewing its current seasonal planting regimes, and is considering the option to move towards a more modern style of planting that will contribute to our place making vision for Cheltenham.



# The Proposal

- Introduction of flowering perennial planting over a 3 year period
- Continuation of floral displays i.e. hanging baskets and containers
- Retain some seasonal bedding e.g. functional festival spaces in Imperial Gardens
- No reductions in overall planting area
- Opportunity to redesign planting bed layout
- Appropriate planting e.g. ornamental, not wild flowers in Imperial Gardens



# What do we mean by flowering perennial planting?

Perennial herbaceous plants, shrubs and grasses that have a long life-cycle and are more suited to the climate and ecology of the site.



# Current public realm planting

Bedding plants provide seasonal flowering, and contribute to the current look and feel of a town within a park.



The Long Gardens



# Historical Context

- Regency planting style - simple naturalistic style that includes perennials.
- Seasonal bedding was introduced to the Long Garden in the late Victorian period and to Imperial Gardens in the 1950's.
- No historical significance to bedding plants.



# Seasonal Context: Spring Bedding in Spring



Imperial Gardens



# Seasonal Context:

## Summer Bedding in Summer

In the summer months, these displays are at their best.



Imperial Gardens



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# Seasonal Context: Spring Bedding in Autumn/Winter



# Seasonal Context: Bedding in Autumn/Winter



# Fair Resource Distribution



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# Bedding Plant Statistics

Spring numbers	87,000
Summer numbers	89,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>176,000</b>

## Of which:

Imperial Gardens	52,000
Long Gardens	41,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93,000</b>

Maintenance effort in these two gardens is significantly higher than other parks and green spaces.



# Seasonal Context: Spring Perennials



Naunton Park



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# Seasonal Context: Late Spring Perennials



# Seasonal Context: Early Summer Perennials



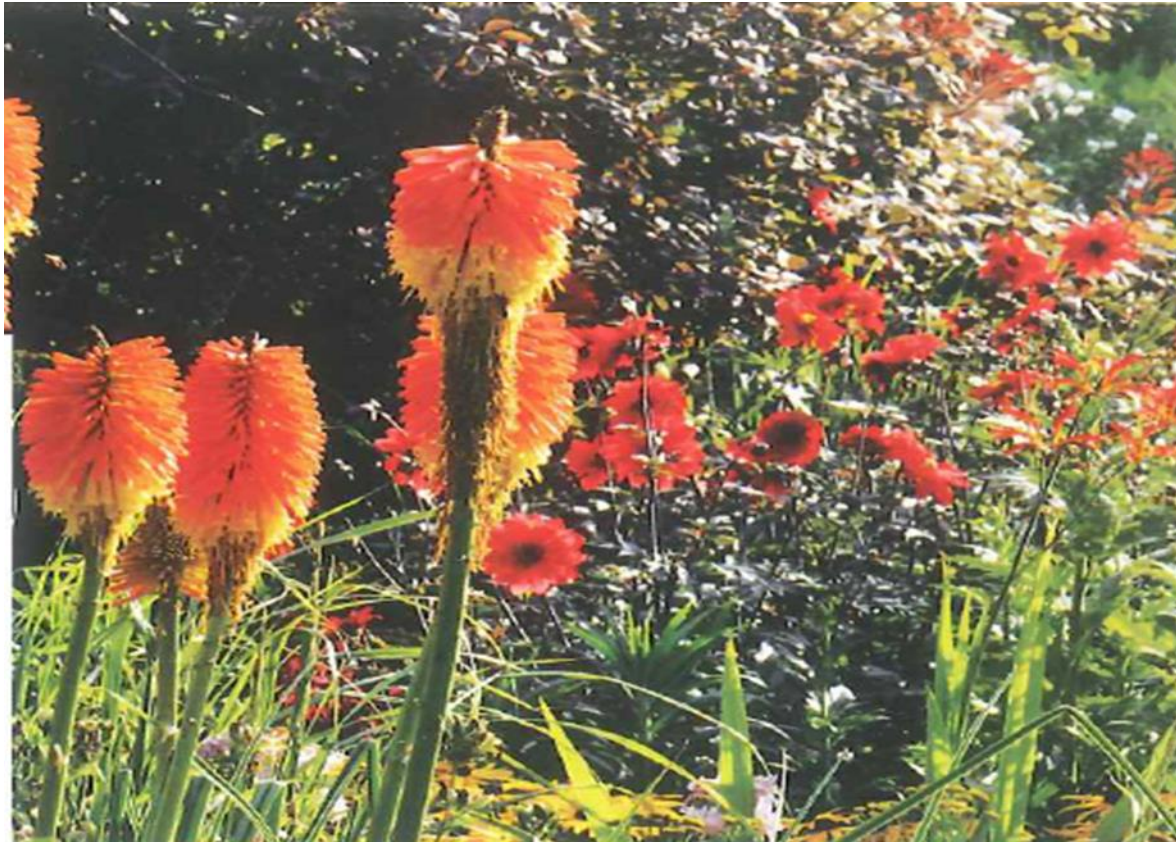
# Seasonal context: Summer Perennials



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# Seasonal context: Autumn Perennials



# Current Trends

A new trend in planting design – ‘mixed planting’, where individual plant varieties are blended and intermingled. Previously, it was widely believed that ‘blocks’ – multiples of the same variety - created the greatest visual impact.



# Grasses with Grace



# Bedding Planting Regime

## Benefits

- Popular with some for being aesthetically pleasing
- Vibrant colours
- Expedient for provision of festival space requirements

## Challenges

- Traditional, lagging behind trend with peers
- Resource hungry to produce and maintain
- High carbon footprint
- Minimal contribution to local biodiversity
- Autumn / winter seasonal schemes are less effective
- Plants struggle to survive wet winters
- Visual only, lacks full sensory impact
- Expensive



# Flowering Perennials Regime / 1

## Benefits

- Opportunity to engage with our place making values, helping to define our ambition for Cheltenham
- Opportunity to design and plant new planting styles
- Flowers, foliage and texture throughout the year
- Improves ecological biodiversity throughout the town, helps pollinating insects
- Greater ability to create structure with the plant material, potential to enhance overall sensory impact
- Greater spectrum of plant choice, encompassing foliage, flower, seed heads, height, form and seasonal variation

## Challenges

- Some people do not like it
- Period of establishment required
- Different approach to maintenance requires investment
- Design needs to be of highest quality, appropriate for setting - formal / informal
- Design needs to incorporate flexibility – festivals requirements
- Plant replenishment may be required to replace initial damage in high usage areas



# Flowering Perennials Regime / 2

## Benefits continued.....

- Robust, adaptable, greater tolerance of plant species to recover from damage / vandalism / changing weather patterns
- New horticultural skill sets developed by garden teams, greater job enrichment
- Positive impact upon carbon footprint through 1) less water use 2) reduced energy production costs 3) less planting out labour 4) less waste 5) minimal topsoil replenishment needed
- Some plants can be kept, divided and reused
- Aligns with CBC values – pioneering, creativity and nurturing



# Stakeholder Concerns

- *Loss of colour and quality of displays*
- *Herbaceous plants are dull and boring*
- *Quality of design and implementation*
- *Impact on visitors / tourism*
- *Purely a cost cutting exercise*
- *It would be good to have an overall view of biodiversity gains (i.e. not just pollinators, hedgehogs, birds soil)*
- *New planting will undermine the attractiveness of Cheltenham and lower the esteem the town once had*
- *Cheltenham without flowers is like Cheltenham without a heart*
- *Doubt that savings on labour can be made as it is essential that planting and maintenance are of the highest quality*



# Stakeholder Support

- *Improve the look of the town as it has in other towns both in the UK & Europe*
- *Provide aesthetic, environmental and economic benefits*
- *Biodiversity gains*
- *Teaching new skills*
- *Less resource heavy*
- *Opportunity to show leadership in gardening with wildlife in mind*
- *Opportunity to do something different - make a statement both in the design and in the way it's used afterwards as a marketing tool*
- *The public would notice a dramatic improvement*
- *Attract more visitors*
- *Current plantings are very old fashioned and a revamp is needed*
- *The current bedding planting schemes have high visual impact but belong to a bygone era*
- *Non visual aspects e.g. the smell / perfume*
- *Planting should be an important element of the Towns image and should emanate from Urban design planning*





# Financials

MTFS funding gap £4m over next 3 years.

Projected costs over 10 years (draft business case):

- Retain current seasonal bedding, grow in-house: additional circa £1m cost.
- Retain current seasonal bedding, buy in plants: additional circa £350k cost
- Change to herbaceous perennials - saves circa £1m
  
- Potential to redevelop Arle nursery site for housing, realise significant capital receipt
- Potential additional council tax from new homes.

Savings / additional income to support the MTFS and protect CBC services



# Place Making

Planting and landscaping play an important part in delivering the place making agenda for Cheltenham.

**What is our ambition for Destination Cheltenham, economic development, inward investment, culture and tourism?**

Planting touches upon all these outcomes.



# Town Centre & Tourism Research



Source: Cheltenham BID, Sept-Nov 2016

**What could this look like in future –  
would it reflect ambition?**



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# Next steps

- Council discussion on 16<sup>th</sup> October prompted by petition to continue with seasonal bedding in Imperial Gardens and the Long Gardens
- Review counter petition to promote and implement sustainable planting across CBCs parks and gardens closing on 31<sup>st</sup> October
- Consider early findings from Royal Well and Promenade Master Planning consultancy project
- Proposal to adopt a perennial planting regime will be submitted to cabinet for consideration in December.
- If approved –
  - Development of a new planting strategy and design
  - Public and stakeholder engagement to be continued
  - Assessment of Arle Nursery options



# Celebrated local gardens

Examples of successful mixed planting i.e.  
seasonal bedding AND perennials



# Berkeley Gardens



# Imperial Gardens

Designs should incorporate different planting styles, selecting the right plants for the right place i.e. appropriate planting



# Jenner Gardens



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# Pittville Park



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# Prestbury Road Roundabout

- Planting style based on Barbican Roof Garden in London by Nigel Dunnet
- Steppe Planting, layers of colour and interest from Spring to Autumn



# Skillicorne Gardens



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# Examples of Planting Schemes contributing to Place Making

- Bristol
- Eastbourne
- Harrogate
- Leamington Spa
- Poole
- Stratford-upon-Avon
- Worthing



# Leamington Spa



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# Manor by The Lake: winter structure



# Height



# Structure





# Colour



# Seasonal Effects



# Celebrated national gardens show-casing perennial planting

- Barbican Roof Garden, London
- Hidcote
- Highgrove
- Hyde Park
- Inner Temple Garden, London
- Suffolk Manor Garden, Suffolk



# Barbican Roof Garden, Summer



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# Barbican Roof Garden, Aug/Sept



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# Barbican Roof Garden, Spring



# Barbican Roof Garden, Late Autumn



# Place Making with Planting



## VISITING HIGHGROVE GARDENS

The Royal Gardens at Highgrove are open to the public on selected dates between April and October each year.



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# Inner Temple Garden, London

Head Gardener says *“it’s about having fun, an alternative way to experience the garden, and a wonderful tool that brings in a different audience and hopefully reaches out to a new generation of gardeners.”*



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# Suffolk Manor Garden, Suffolk

Judges said the garden was “*rich with variety*”.



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# Ambitious Place Making

Planting talking points include;

- The Olympic Park, London
- Manhattan High Line, New York



# Impact of Planting on Tourism

## EMPIRE STATE OF MIND

Darryl Moore discovers the breadth of new public landscape projects inspired by the success of Manhattan's High Line



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# Transformational Place Making with Planting



## THE OLYMPIC PARK

ON 27 JULY 2012, A LANDSCAPING TEAM'S ENDEAVOURS WILL COME TO FRUITION, DELIVERING A MULTIFUNCTIONAL, SUSTAINABLE SCHEME

[World Studio Ltd](#)

**THE OLYMPIC PARK** is a unique space to be built in it with a landscape goal of an outdoor place for water both to provide an attractive grip. The London 2012 Olympic Park is a catalyst for the urban regeneration of the Olympic Park. The Olympic Park is a unique space to be built in it with a landscape goal of an outdoor place for water both to provide an attractive grip. The London 2012 Olympic Park is a catalyst for the urban regeneration of the Olympic Park.

### An Olympic Park

Three occupied by British in a post-war residential estate, clearing and restoration is

Clearing and closing air and remediation started in 1990. The Olympic Park is a unique space to be built in it with a landscape goal of an outdoor place for water both to provide an attractive grip. The London 2012 Olympic Park is a catalyst for the urban regeneration of the Olympic Park.

The need for an early air high quality grass stock has been identified. Species selected plants. A two year planting of the completion of ground preparation and landscaping work. The Olympic Park is a unique space to be built in it with a landscape goal of an outdoor place for water both to provide an attractive grip. The London 2012 Olympic Park is a catalyst for the urban regeneration of the Olympic Park.

Planting needed to be in place at least one growing and grass seeds to establish



[www.sgd.org.uk](#)



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