Active local centres

Neighbourhood and civic centres of different scales play a vital role in bringing together residents of all ages for shopping, socialising, and hosting local events.

Public realm design can help to create attractive and vibrant urban centres that support a range of retail and community activities, while mitigating the negative impacts of vehicular traffic.

Where has it been achieved?

- Colquhoun Square, Helensburgh
  - Argyll and Bute Council & Austin-Smith: Lord
  - Colquhoun Square been re-imagined as a flexible civic space capable of hosting community events, markets, and an ‘outdoor museum’ - with plinths & bollards embedded with artwork and artefacts from local history. New seating, widened pavements and high quality surfaces have been installed to help promote outdoor activity and encourage greater footfall between the town centre and the seafront.

- Vauxhall Walk (part of the Vauxhall Missing Link framework)
  - Vauxhall One and Erect Architecture with J&L Gibbons
  - Vauxhall Walk is part of a series of public realm improvements between the Nine Elms regeneration site and the South Bank. This new public space replaces a neglected dead-end road and provides a new gateway into Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. Activity from the café outdoor seating spills out onto the space, and areas of sustainable urban drainage planting help to define routes and form a buffer between pedestrians/cyclists and vehicular traffic.

- Kings Heath Village
  - All Saints Centre, Kings Heath & Parkwood Consultancy Services
  - Extensive public consultations were held to ensure that local communities and key groups were engaged in the project and could contribute to the design elements of the new Village Square. The scheme creates a high quality, safe, and accessible public space for play, local events and markets, as well as a gateway to the church buildings. The design incorporated historic elements such as the existing gravestones and mature trees.

Food & outdoor dining

- Café tables and food markets should be encouraged to enliven public spaces and provide opportunities for people watching.

Car-free spaces

- Some pedestrianised streets can prioritise pedestrian traffic by closing off access for vehicles with rising bollards during certain times. This reduces noise and air pollution in car-free zones and encourages sustainable travel.

Markets & event space

- Space to accommodate regular stall holders, seasonal markets, fun events and创意 markets. Access arrangements, management systems, and flexibility are key to the success of these spaces, requiring forward planning & design with stakeholders and potential users.

Places to pause & watch

- Seating is important throughout the built environment, but particular attention needs to be paid to the design and management of seating in busier public spaces. A diverse range of people and groups should be able to meet and sit without excluding others.

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