

# PUBLIC REALM MASTERPLAN

## CHELTENHAM MINSTER

EdgeDesignWorkshop

RIBA  architects



**European Union**  
European Regional  
Development Fund

## INTRODUCTION

The Minster is the oldest building in Cheltenham and is Grade I Listed. Despite its historic importance there have been a number of more recent developments that now surround it which have effectively turned their back on the church and its grounds. The resulting effect is that the church has become a forgotten jewel in the town and there have been a number of problems with antisocial behaviour in its ground which further reduces visitor numbers. With relatively few people crossing the grounds there is little connection between the lower High Street, which is often very busy and Clarence Street to the other side where the Wilson Art Gallery and Public Library are located.

The proposed Pubic Realm improvements follow planning approval for an Innovation Hub on land to the rear of Chester Walk in Cheltenham which is now as Workshop Cheltenham. The original scheme was based on the re-use of recycled shipping containers [planning reference 19/00204/FUL], however a revised application using bespoke modular construction is currently under consideration, with a decision expected on August 13<sup>th</sup> 2020.

The aspirations of the project remain as originally intended and include a Tier II Growth Hub which will be delivered in partnership with GFirst LEP, an event space which will be curated in partnership with Cheltenham Festivals, a cafe and bar, and flexible studio space. The studios will be orientated towards the creative industries within the town such as digital, media, culture, cyber and technology, and as such the Growth Hub will offer specialist support in these areas.

The event space will be flexible enough to accommodate a variety of uses, from break out meeting areas to a conference hall, or for performances in music and the arts. The Culture Board identified the gap of cultural spaces for the 18-30 age group as a key missing element in the offering of Cheltenham and has been consulted along the way with the project

The cultural events will be orientated towards young performers and visitors to the county, and will build on the work that is already underway such as educational outreach and talent development programmes by Cheltenham Festivals and similar programmes by Cheltenham Trust and the theatres, among others.

Indeed, one of the key aspirations of the project is to provide a cultural “beating heart” for the town centre by providing a neutral meeting place where collaboration and cross pollination of ideas can take place. The physical setting of the project is therefore key to its integration into the fabric of the town and therefore a wider public realm masterplan is now proposed for the immediate area in which the project is based.

The Workshop Cheltenham project is neighboured by Gloucestershire libraries [both the main library and the library annex which includes an archive and social services], The Wilson Art Gallery and St. Mary’s Church which is also known as Cheltenham Minster. The Minster is the oldest building in Cheltenham and is Grade I Listed. Despite its historic importance there have been a number of more recent developments that now surround it which have effectively turned their back on the church and its grounds. The resulting effect is that the church has become a forgotten jewel in the town and there have been a number of problems with antisocial behaviour in its ground which further reduces visitor numbers. With relatively few people crossing the grounds there is little connection between the lower High Street, which is often very busy and Clarence Street to the other side where the Wilson Art Gallery and Public Library are located. The intention of the proposals is therefore to create a cultural destination that includes the Minster, its grounds, the art gallery, museum and library and the Workshop Cheltenham project.

## PROPOSAL

### ACTIVITY LAWN

Either side of the footpaths will be a new Activity lawn, with electrical connections provided for pop up events and gatherings. Seating in this area will be flexible to allow a variety of uses. This feature can be used for outdoor activities by the Minster, The Wilson, Workshop Cheltenham or link to the festivals and community events, increasing the frequency of positive public activities and animating the space.

## MEETING PLACE

New Fixed and flexible accessible social seating is proposed within this area to encourage visitors to spend a little longer in the grounds, with more people using the space for positive activities it should help to displace anti-social uses. Additional seating will also provide an option to avoid sitting on the historical monuments and gave tables relieving the pressure on these features.

## BIODIVERSITY GARDEN AND PUBLIC ART

The Minster Grounds are in a poor condition due to a number of factors, but with a poor grass sward, inappropriate shrub planting and a heavy tree canopy this does not help to make the space feel welcoming or safe.

As part of the borough’s Habitat Cheltenham project the existing landscape will be redesigned to increase the variety and number of plant species. This will involve increasing the species mix of the grass areas with a particular interest in increasing the spring and autumn colours to encourage visitors at the beginning of the year and extend the appeal of the space into autumn.

Management of the shrub and tree species will also be considered, both to increase the amenity of the space and increase the biodiversity. Opportunities to combine art and historical references into the landscape in a practical and appropriate manner will also be incorporated.

Visitor movement through the site will be partially controlled by the planting of wildflower/ bulb planting biodiversity gardens. Within the gardens will be allocated zones for public art which will be curated by The Cheltenham Trust which will provide much needed outdoor space for sculptures and installations.

The intention of the proposals is therefore to create a cultural destination that includes the Minster, its grounds, the art gallery, museum and library and the Workshop Cheltenham project. Public art plays a vital role in place making. Public art is only limited by the imagination of the artist and the guardians of public space. It can be a temporary installation, lighting a building, film & video, sculpture, ceramics, metal, textiles, plastic, street furniture, landscaping, a poster, poetry, performance, a website, a social enterprise, a shared idea, a new social relationship and more.

## FOOTPATH IMPROVEMENT

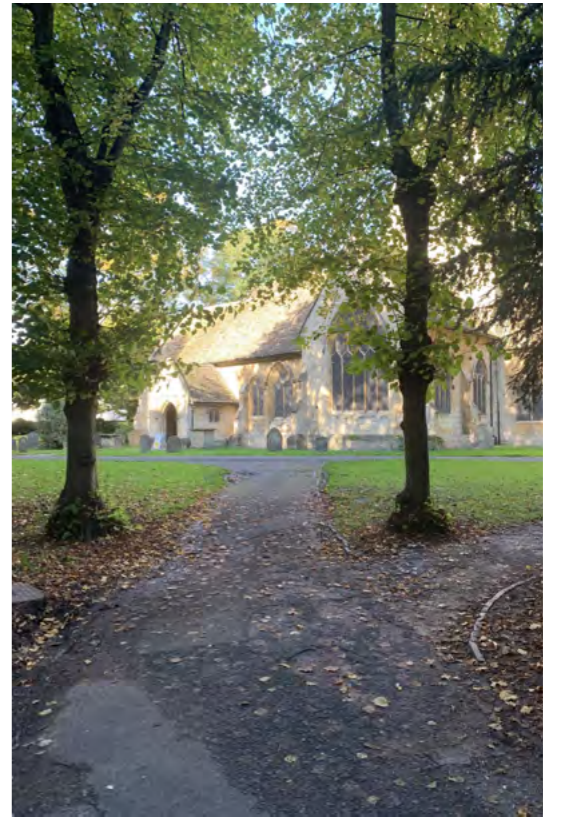
Footpaths throughout the site are in poor condition and unpleasant to use in wet conditions and surfaced in tarmac unsympathetic to the Grade 1 listing of the Minster. They are also currently unprotected from vehicles illegally using the space for parking.

New surfacing is proposed to provide higher quality, fully accessible pedestrian routes, protected from cars. These will follow the existing historical path routes but also include a new access into Workshop Cheltenham. Because of the highly sensitivity nature of the buried remains within the grounds new path construction will be designed to minimize any ground disturbance and will have new surfaces to improve accessibility as well as improving the setting of the church.

## LIGHTING

The Minster Grounds support a number of mature large trees and the space is surrounded by tall buildings, consequently the space has low light levels even in good daylight conditions. To encourage greater public use, particularly in twilight, it is proposed to increase the amenity lighting helping to increase the perception of public safety and to assist way finding with sufficient ambient light to be welcoming whilst preserving the special serenity of the grounds.

Additional to this the masterplan seeks to introduce feature lighting to both celebrate the space’s cultural and creative connections, and to ‘signpost’ the pedestrian entrances in an imaginative and engaging way. Feature lighting is also proposed to highlight the Minster spire creating a landmark feature at night and to use the interior of the Minster for ‘shared’ light within the grounds.



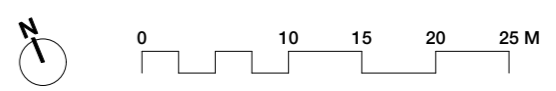
EXISTING SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

EdgeDesignWorkshop

Copyright © EdgeDesignWorkshop Ltd. 2020



EXISTING BLOCK PLAN 1:500



EdgeDesignWorkshop  
 Copyright © EdgeDesignWorkshop Ltd. 2020



DIAGRAM KEY

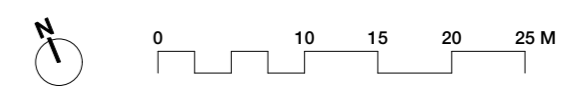
- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | Shopmobility                           |  | Proposed lightweight elevated footpath  |
|  | Existing hard landscaping              |  | Proposed meeting place  |
|  | Existing grass areas                   |  | Proposed activity lawn  |
|  | Existing trees                         |  | Proposed low level shrubs   |
|  | Historical footpath - Well Walk        |  | Proposed high level lighting  |
|  | Historical footpath - Processional Way |  | Proposed biodiversity garden and community art in partnership with The Wilson |

NOTE: Lighting to be provided along Well Walk, Processional Way, Cheltenham Minster steeple, spire and west elevation

PUBLIC REALM MASTERPLAN 1:500

EdgeDesignWorkshop

Copyright © EdgeDesignWorkshop Ltd. 2020



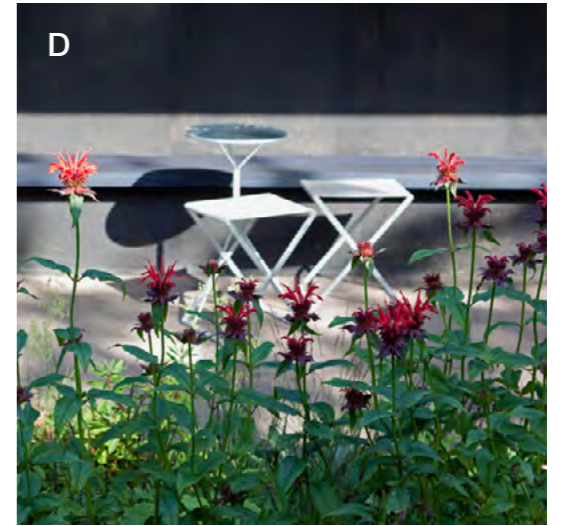
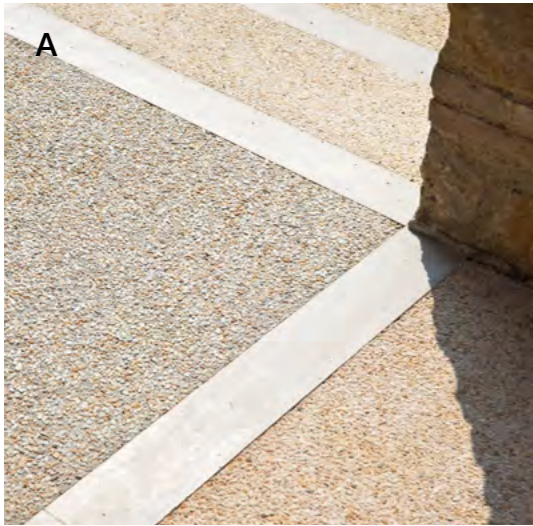


DIAGRAM KEY

- A** Footpath finishes
- B** Biodiversity garden
- C** Fixed seating
- D** Flexible seating
- E** Floating footpath

BIODIVERSITY, SEATING & FOOTPATHS PRECEDENTS

EdgeDesignWorkshop

Copyright © EdgeDesignWorkshop Ltd. 2020

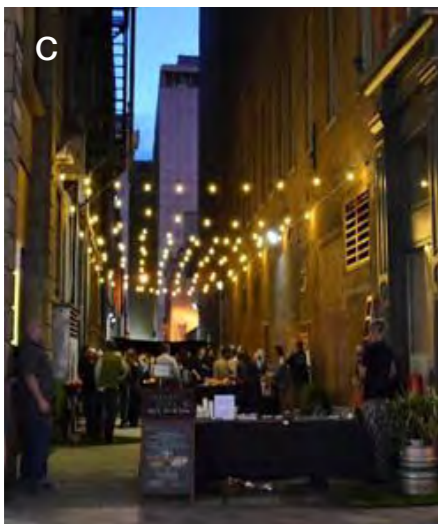
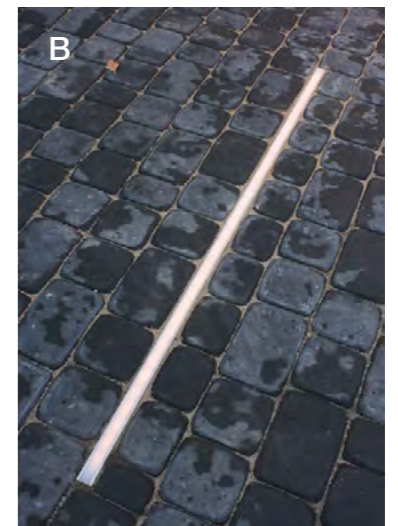
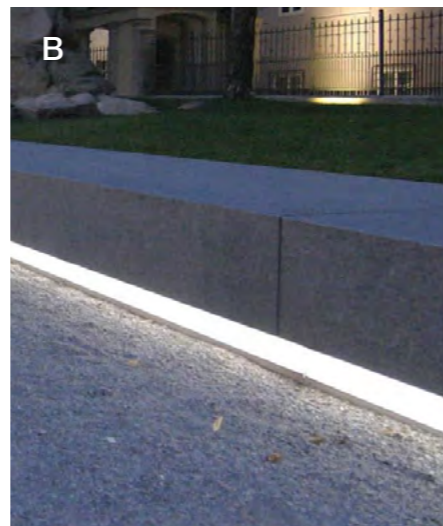


DIAGRAM KEY

- A** Church lighting
- B** Footpath lighting
- C** Alleyway lighting

ALLEYWAY & LIGHTING PRECEDENTS

EdgeDesignWorkshop

Copyright © EdgeDesignWorkshop Ltd. 2020



**European Union**  
European Regional  
Development Fund

# Edge**Design**Workshop

RIBA  architects

7 Royal Well Place, Cheltenham GL50 3DN

01242 528 111

10 Martello Street, London E8 3PE

020 7781 8177

[mail@edgedesignworkshop.com](mailto:mail@edgedesignworkshop.com)

[www.edgedesignworkshop.com](http://www.edgedesignworkshop.com)

Copyright © EdgeDesignWorkshop Ltd. 2020

EdgeDesignWorkshop Ltd. is a limited company registered in England and

Wales with a registration number 4647312.

RIBA Chartered practice 20022034.

**PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL**  
**ISSUE 07 - 21 07 2020**  
**PUBLIC REALM MASTERPLAN**