

## SA3 – Valley Gardens



### Supporting Documents:

Local Transport Plan - 2006  
 LR2 PBA Transport Study - 2007  
 London Road and Lewes Road (LR2) Regeneration Study - 2007  
 Public Space Public Life Study 2007  
 Conservation Strategy - 2003  
 Valley Gardens Conservation Area Study and Enhancement Plan -1995  
 Neighbourhood Survey Report - 2006  
 Air Quality Action Plan - 2007

### Context

2.126 For the purposes of this preferred option, the Valley Gardens area comprises the streets and open spaces that run in a line from Old Steine in the south to the Level in the north, excluding the Pavilion Gardens. This area is of unique strategic significance to Brighton & Hove in the way in which a number of major issues co-exist and, in some cases, conflict. These include: the area's role as an arrival/departure point for visitors; its role as a major traffic route with the A23 sustainable transport corridor; its cultural and heritage significance (including the Royal Pavilion); its provision of open space; its inclusion within the academic corridor; its wide mix of land uses; and its role as a venue for major events. However, the area is currently failing to fulfil its potential.

### Preferred Option – SA3 Valley Gardens

The council will work with public and private sector partners to enhance and regenerate the Valley Gardens area in an integrated manner that reinforces its strategic significance, emphasises its historic and cultural character, reduces the adverse impact of vehicular traffic, improves local air quality and creates a continuous green boulevard that reconnects the area to the surrounding urban realm.

The six overall aims are:

1. Reducing the severance impact of traffic on the enjoyment of the public realm through environmental improvements;
2. Creating coherent, safe and useable green spaces;
3. Creating legible links with adjoining areas, particularly for visitors; and
4. Enhancing the appearance and setting of historic buildings.

5. Finding appropriate new uses for key buildings.
6. Accommodating provision for high quality outdoor events,

The distinct role and character of each green space will be clarified having regard to the following priorities:

#### Old Steine - the hub

- Emphasise its role as a visitor destination space.
- Enhance the arrival and departure experience for visitors by ensuring simple, comprehensible links to and from the seafront and the Lanes.
- Ease the movement of pedestrians and cyclists through recapturing road space and creating direct crossing points, particularly to re-connect St James's Street with the city centre.

#### Victoria Gardens - the cultural park

Pursue a comprehensive landscape / townscape scheme to:

- a) Improve navigable links for pedestrians both between the two gardens and with the Cultural Quarter.
  - b) Redesign the gardens to include new pathways, tree planting and public art and investigate the potential for a café building.
  - c) Improve the junctions with Kingswood Street, Morley Street and Richmond Parade through environmental improvements or redevelopment where appropriate.
- Encourage a comprehensive solution to the re-use or redevelopment of buildings on Gloucester Place for a mix of uses.
  - Secure funding for open space improvements from new developments in the vicinity.
  - Seek the restoration of groups of buildings on Grand Parade.

#### St Peter's - the historic landmark

- Secure the long term future of St Peter's Church; and enhance its setting through public realm improvements.
- a) Support proposals for refurbishment/enhancement of the facilities and appearance of the Phoenix Gallery building, possibly through a mixed use redevelopment.
  - b) Enhance the retail environment through alterations to, or redevelopment of, the supermarket building on the corner of Cheapside and through shop front improvements to York Place.

#### The Level - the recreation and leisure space

- Pursue a comprehensive landscaping scheme for The Level that will distinguish functions of spaces, enhance entrances and improve public safety.
- Improve the key links to London Road and the Open Market.
- Improve the public realm to the south of The Level.

## Supporting Text

**2.127** The Local Transport Plan includes proposals to transform the area between the seafront and St Peter's Church into a coherent city park through traffic management measures and urban realm improvements, potentially with a two way traffic on the eastern side. It also includes proposals to improve Pool Valley coach station, as a major gateway to the city. Valley Gardens is included in the 2008 declared Air Quality Management Area.

**2.128** The council's Public Space Public Life Study (2007) argues that Valley Gardens could become the grand route into the city and notes that Victoria Gardens south is a much under-used green space due to its poor quality. It proposes a more unified Valley Gardens that creates a pleasant, attractive and inviting 'green lung', with each green space embodying a unique character and offering a different experience. It suggests that vehicular traffic be re-organised on the west side to reduce traffic volume and that the council blur the boundary between the gardens and the Pavilion Gardens and the Cultural Quarter. Further, it makes detailed design suggestions for the Old Steine junction.

**2.129** The LR2 Study (2007) notes that much of the Valley Gardens open space is under-performing and failing to reach its potential to contribute to the character, function and quality of the area. With regard to The Level, it draws attention to the poor layout of its southern end, access difficulties and anti-social behaviour after dark. The study notes that St Peter's Church, whilst an important landmark is situated in an area of open space which is rarely used. Accessibility is noted as the major problem affecting this space and Victoria Gardens. The study proposes the creation of a series of connected, high quality green spaces making a grand civic gesture and creating a strong, legible pedestrian route. It states that the success of this vision will also depend on improvements to the surrounding highways to reduce the impact of traffic.

**2.130** The council's Conservation Strategy (2003) includes a commitment to working with the church authorities to secure the future of potentially redundant Anglican churches such as St Peter's Church. It also states that the future priority for any historic area grant schemes is likely to be Valley Gardens.

**2.131** The Valley Gardens Conservation Area Study and Enhancement Plan (1995) proposed that a new pedestrian pathway be created through Victoria Gardens and that they could be used as a sculpture park. This document further proposed: improvements to Pool Valley; a more attractive link from Old Steine to East Street; improved landscaping to The Level; the restoration of buildings in Grand Parade; and traditional shop front reinstatement in York Place. Buildings were identified which could be redeveloped to enhance the conservation area.

**2.132** The Neighbourhood Survey Report (2006) linked to the Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study revealed that The Level is one of the six most used open spaces in the city. Improvements requested were: greater formal recreation facilities; more planting; more seating; and better lighting.

**2.133** The purpose of this preferred option is to ensure that the strategic importance of the Valley Gardens is fully recognised and that disparate proposals for, and pressures on, the area are considered within the context of an overall spatial framework that integrates and balances different or competing demands.

## Implementation

**2.134** The primary means of implementation, in the medium term, will be through the Local Transport Plan scheme to redirect all traffic along the east side of Valley Gardens (south of the Level). Funding is currently set aside for development and implementation of the scheme from 2010. Proposed improvements to the Pool Valley coach station are underway, funded through the Local Transport Plan in partnership with National Express with implementation scheduled for 2007/2008.

**2.135** Redevelopment of key sites and buildings will involve working with land owners and developers. The Circus Street proposals are dealt with in the Eastern Road Edward Street Development Area (DA5) where the University of Brighton is a key partner and proposals for the Grand Parade Campus will be dealt with through the proposed Universities SPD (See DA3). Developer contributions from the redevelopment of sites either side of Victoria Gardens will be expected for open space and legibility improvements and public art in the gardens.

**2.136** Repairs and restoration to key groups of historic buildings may be achieved through grant schemes in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund or English Heritage. Shop front improvements to York Place may be achieved through such a grant scheme and/or through the development control process, utilising the Shop Front Design SPD, in cooperation with local businesses.

**2.137** Securing the long term future of St. Peter's Church will be achieved in partnership with the church authorities and English Heritage. Urban realm and public safety improvements to the Level will primarily be the responsibility of the council.