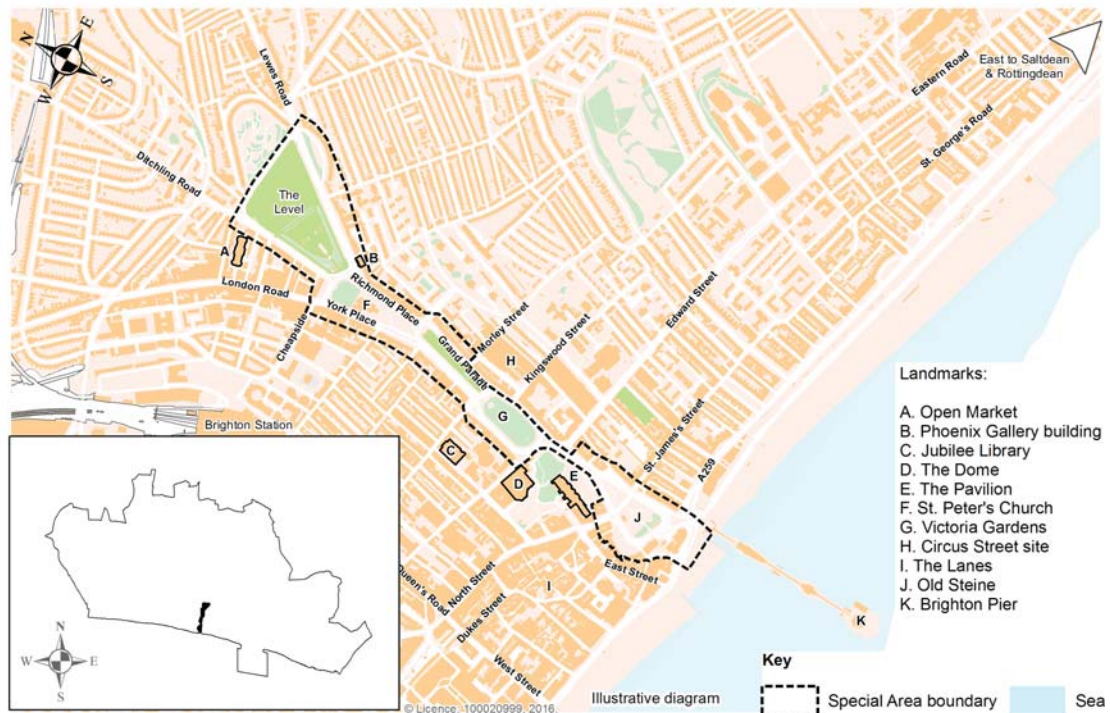


SA3 Valley Gardens



Context

3.144 For the purposes of this policy, the Valley Gardens comprise the open spaces and surrounding roads that run in a linear manner from Old Steine in the south to the Level in the north, excluding the Pavilion Gardens. This area is of unique strategic and topographic 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 function as a major traffic route (the A23 sustainable transport corridor); its cultural and heritage significance; its provision of public 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.

SA3 Valley Gardens

The city council will work with public and private sector partners and the local community 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 open space to the surrounding urban realm.

The seven overall aims are:

1. Creating a vibrant and attractive new public park for the city centre.

2. Reducing the severance impact of traffic on the enjoyment of the public realm through environmental and transport improvements;
3. Creating safe and legible links with adjoining areas;
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; and
7. Enhancing the biodiversity of the area.

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, safe and 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 reconnect St James's Street with the city centre.

Victoria Gardens - the cultural park

- Pursue a comprehensive landscape / townscape scheme to:
 - a) Improve navigable and safe links for pedestrians both between the two gardens and with the Cultural Quarter.
 - b) Redesign the gardens to include new pathways, tree planting, benches 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.
- Seek the restoration of historic buildings on Grand Parade.

St Peter's - the historic landmark

- Enhance the setting of St Peter's Church through public realm improvements.
- Support proposals for refurbishment/enhancement of the facilities and appearance of the Phoenix Gallery building, possibly through a mixed use redevelopment.

- **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 vibrant recreation and leisure space

- **Improve the legibility and safety of key pedestrian and cycle links to London Road and the Open Market.**
- **Enhance the public realm to the south of The Level.**

Development within the Valley Gardens area will be encouraged to consider low and zero carbon decentralised energy and in particular heat networks and to either connect where a suitable system is in place (or would be at the time of construction) or design systems so that they are compatible with future connection to a network.

Supporting Text

3.145 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the strategic potential of the Valley Gardens as public open space is fully realised and that future proposals for the regeneration of this historic area are considered within the context of an overall spatial framework. Two council studies, the Public Space Public Life Study and the LR2 Study¹⁰⁸, argue that Valley Gardens could become the grand civic route into the city and propose the creation of an attractive and inviting ‘green lung’, with each green space embodying a unique character and offering a different experience. Table 1 on page 26 sets out how this policy will help to deliver against the principles and local targets under the One Planet approach, which is a strategic approach to enabling the city to live within environmental limits.

3.146 The public open spaces of Valley Gardens have the potential to be linked together to create a single continuous public park, which would form a key connecting section of the ‘green network’ in the city. Accessibility to the open space will need to be improved, whilst new planted tree screening and water features, for example, can help towards improving local air quality and biodiversity as well as reducing the impact of traffic noise. Enhancing biodiversity should include provision for wildlife movement to and from other green space in the valley, including private gardens. New landscaping and planting must also reinforce existing local character and may include productive planting that contributes towards improving urban food productivity where appropriate. The Level was restored and landscaped in line with the master plan for the comprehensive improvement of the park and was re-opened in 2013.

3.147 Reducing the severance impact of vehicular traffic will involve redressing the balance between road space and other land uses. This may

¹⁰⁸ Public Space, Public Life Study, 2007 and London Road and Lewes Road Regeneration Strategy, 2007.

include rerouting traffic and would need to be accompanied by improvements to provision for sustainable transport. Valley Gardens has bus lanes serving key city routes and cycles lanes that, with enhancement, would form a direct link from the seafront to the north of the city. Any such scheme will be subject to detailed traffic modelling and will need to include improvements to the functionality and appearance of the Aquarium Roundabout, to improve the pedestrian and cycle links between the Old Steine and the seafront.

3.148 The City Council will be reviewing and improving its existing transport modelling capability (see CP9 Sustainable Transport) which will allow for a rigorous basis for assessing the impact of future transport measures. As a result, details of significant measures that may result in changes to the road network in Valley Gardens will be reserved until such an assessment has been undertaken.

3.149 Throughout the area, but particularly on Grand Parade, there are historic buildings in visibly poor condition. A co-ordinated and pro-active approach will be necessary to address this issue. Allied to this, new uses must be found for key vacant historic buildings, notably at Old Steine and Gloucester Place. Arts-based uses will be encouraged in and around Victoria Gardens.

3.150 Parts of Valley Gardens, notably The Level and around St Peter's Church have a poor reputation in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour and these problems must be actively addressed in all proposals for new uses and the layout of buildings and public spaces.

3.151 With regard to the Old Steine, its proximity to Pool Valley coach station, the seafront and the Lanes, as well as the presence of major hotels, warrant greater attention to the provision of legible routes, appropriate facilities and clear information for visitors.

3.152 Where appropriate, new developments will be expected to contribute towards these aims (where they relate to the development and meet the tests in the National Planning Policy Framework). Such developments will include the nearby Circus Street site, which is clearly visible from Victoria Gardens (see policy DA5).

3.153 The Brighton & Hove Energy Study has identified particular potential for District Heating networks in and around this area within a long list of priority areas. Development within the long-list of priority areas will be encouraged to consider low and zero carbon decentralised energy and in particular heat networks and required to either connect where a suitable system is in place, or would be at the time of construction, or design systems so that they are compatible with future connection to a network.