

ADEPT President's Awards 2023

Entry form

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Award category	Shaping Places for People
Project Title	Southside Public Realm Improvements
Local authority entrant	Birmingham City Council
Partner/s if applicable	Jacobs UK Limited

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

This public realm project facilitated the Commonwealth Games by delivering a new vibrant and innovative public square for the people of Birmingham.

Shaping places for people: How was this project an innovative response to a significant concern? (150 words max.)

This public realm project facilitated the Commonwealth Games by delivering a new public square and improving pedestrian routes from Southside to New Street Station. The Commonwealth Games were viewed by Birmingham City Council (BCC) as a rare chance to draw attention to Birmingham as a world-city, and so BCC was eager for the project to be ambitious and cutting-edge, while meeting a challenging delivery schedule. The original construction partner went into administration 6 months into the original 18 month, £6.5m programme of Southside Redevelopment. The May 2022 completion of the programme was no longer achievable and put the Commonwealth Games in jeopardy, potentially compromising a route for one of the sports events and the key walking routes connecting event venues. We developed an innovative design for the Pride colours using cold-applied Methyl Methacrylate (MMA) paint to the tarmac surface to ensure that construction and delivery did not jeopardise the Games.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

To achieve a quality public realm space and meet the key requests of the diverse communities living in Birmingham, a colourful design was developed by the team. The team worked to closely understand the 'beating heart' of Birmingham and its residents, to create a design that truly resonated with local communities. To provide the bright colours, the design proposed cold-applied MMA paint to be applied to the tarmac surface. This gave a vibrant finish which could be applied quickly and was widely welcomed by the local stakeholders and organisations. This approach demonstrates what can be achieved to upgrade public realm in short timescales for major events. The striking colourful circular feature created a legacy for those who attended during the games and the lessons and best practice of reusing and recycling infrastructure will be taken on to future BCC projects.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words)

max.)

This was highly collaborative across the Place, Prosperity and Sustainability Directorate in BCC, the community groups, the business district and the community, with weekly meetings to agree final designs. The solution created benefits for the people of Birmingham and the people watching and visiting from across the Commonwealth. The circular design represented the people and culture of the city, whilst incorporating the LGBTQ+ colours to reflect the Gay Village in the surrounding Southside area. It had an HIV Statue and open event space for Birmingham Pride 2022 and Lunar New Year Celebration in 2023. The vibrant design was a focal point of Commonwealth Games footfall, bringing more business to the area. It improved accessibility for all pedestrian users as it included an at-grade footway. Additionally, the removal of antisocial hubs, like the out-of-use phone boxes and the introduction of the Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) measures made the area safer.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care and external organisations. (150 words max.)

The overall design and outcome of the project was met with resounding buy-in and success, with positive feedback from the community and achieving the important aim of allowing the Commonwealth Games sports event to go ahead through Southside Public Realm. The design further resonated with the local community, with calls to make the colourful feature permanent. The requirements for Southside Interim Design were set by numerous key stakeholders including BCC and the Southside Bid Team. We implemented a collaborative design process by actively engaging with the stakeholders and with the police, Local Enterprise Partnership Funding, local businesses, and the construction contractor. This allowed the design team to do a 'Walk and Talk' design and build session, where we engaged with all services in a collaborative and semi-formal discussion to generate ideas in a proactive group setting. This collaboration allowed construction to be agreed rapidly.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

While this project benefitted in part from funding provided by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), finances were limited due to the original design partner entering administration 6 months into the 18-month contract. We sourced additional funding through the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), submitting TAG-complaint funding requirements which were audited and approved. Despite this, we were still working within a tight budget and worked to achieve cost-savings through smart design and material re-use wherever possible.