



Story gardens and routes consultation questions

1. Do you agree with the aims of the story gardens?

- be community spaces to relax in and enjoy
- offer an opportunity to learn about the rich heritage of the city
- include educational stories or activities for school children to enjoy
- be able to host local events such as performers, writing groups, history talks
- be safe spaces for all, that are well lit, easy to enter and exit
- be spaces that are accessible for those with disabilities or mobility issues
- be practical to maintain in the future
- encourage wildlife - bird boxes, plants for pollinators, greenwalls, biodiverse planting
- act as a starting point for a visitor to further explore the story and related themes with signposting to other relevant sites

BID feedback:

The stated aims of the story gardens are all important. We hope they would be the expectation for any public or private outdoor / green space, especially being safe, well lit, accessible, well maintained, supportive of biodiversity and generally enjoyable spaces. We would like to add clean to the essentials list, with regular litter picking which includes offensive waste, and also weeding.

We want to emphasise the need for the gardens to be maintained in the future. Much of the city isn't cleaned or maintained sufficiently on a regular basis, in particular the pavements and weeding, but also litter picking in many areas. Can the Council provide an indication of how this will take place once the Levelling Up interventions are complete?

Regarding biodiverse planting, could some of the space in the story gardens be allocated to interpretive gardening, for example well-being / herbal / medicinal gardens or even vegetable gardens? Could businesses or community groups officially adopt part of the space like a Friends group would do?

Regarding the points about providing information (“opportunity to learn about the rich heritage” and “act as a starting point for a visitor to further explore”), we recommend the interpretation available

in the story gardens references the surrounding area, including links to Visit Canterbury where further information about the area is available.

We suggest that the aim for “rich heritage, education stories, spaces that can host events, accessible spaces” could also include signposting to what exists around them, not least the brilliant shopping, hospitality, attractions/entertainment and the business stories of the city. Some of these spaces will also have a natural appeal to certain visitors and encourage exploration, for example Westgate Gardens and Solly’s Orchard are popular for wedding photos.

The routes to the story gardens provide a great opportunity to not only link spaces together but also highlight areas along the journey. Canterbury now has five distinct quarters in addition to the High Street: The King’s Mile, Cathedral Quarter, Castle Quarter, Whitefriars Shopping Centre and the newly forming West End. We would like to see the cities’ existing offering included in the planning of the story gardens and routes alongside old and new stories.

1.a Please tell us why

An enhanced offering in the “garden” space around the city provides new reasons for people to visit and dwell, and also connects the community to the space. The gardens (and routes) have the potential to encourage movement of people around the city to help spread of footfall and encourage more dwell time and incidental spend which has reduced significantly since the pandemic (see the City Performance Data available on the BID website). It’s important to note that whilst some sales performance figures are up, they don’t account for inflation. Margins are increasingly tight and combined with the significant recruitment and retention challenge all businesses are facing, businesses are still in a precarious position. The story gardens offers a free experience which is much needed during this cost of living crisis.

From a tourism perspective, at the BID’s AGM on 20 June, we asked the audience of 100+ what they considered to be a key opportunity Canterbury has in the next 3-5 years and the top answer was “tourism”.

The story gardens also meet the objectives of the city’s Bloom agenda which is chaired by Canterbury BID and aims to help provide a positive lasting impression of the city. Research shows that places that are attractive, well maintained and which demonstrate a ‘spirit of community’ perform better than those that don’t, from an economic impact perspective (jobs, spend, occupancy). An improved environment brings more customers and revenues, and less graffiti and vandalism, which benefits everyone.

2. What do you think about the following potential locations for the story gardens?

- Castle grounds
- St George's Tower, St George's Street (also known as the Clock Tower)
- City wall
- Dane John Gardens
- Garden of St Mary de Castro, Castle Street
- Greyfriars Gardens (the publicly-accessible area)
- Longport public realm - opposite Longport car park adjacent to the Abbey
- Miller's Field
- Monastery Street pocket park (on the corner of Monastery Street and Church Street)
- Courtyard in front of the closed Nasons store, High Street
- Solly's Orchard and Abbots Mill

- St George's roundabout - surrounds at all pedestrian subway entry/exit points around the roundabout
- St Radigund's Garden, St Radigund's Street
- Three Cities Garden, Best Lane
- Tower of St Mary Magdalene, Burgate
- Westgate Gardens

The starting point for this discussion by the BID board was about which areas of the city need the intervention most urgently, and also spreading the interventions throughout the city (geographical spread). Top of the list were the bus station area, Nason's forecourt, Castle grounds (to make the most of the LUF work happening there), Dane John Gardens (crucial event space in the city), Three Cities Garden and Greyfriars. This relates to how the spaces work for visitors (including tourists and locals) as well as those who work in the city.

In addition, the board felt that whichever gardens were selected, the key to the success of the interventions will be in how the routes work and how the gardens are linked together, including how the gardens will be promoted.

In terms of prioritising, there are areas listed that require minimal intervention (for example, Three Cities) – at least half on the list don't need a lot.

2.a If you have specific objections, please state these

2.b If you have any other suggestions, please state these

- Can Canterbury Cathedral be included in the routes / wayfinding, and/or Canterbury Tales of England? What about other private / paid for spaces such as the Franciscan Gardens?
- Could the green area between the Pound and Café du Soleil be included?
- Will the area near Chom Chom (city wall) be included?

3. Do you agree with the things that should be considered when designing the story gardens?

Yes but needs to include

- Clean and tidy
- Ongoing maintenance – indication of how this will work
- Consideration needs to be given to the policing of the gardens. Many of the gardens suggested have suffered over many years from rough sleepers, anti-social behaviour etc and with some of these being locked to stop this behaviour taking place. Being accessible to all as places for relaxation and contemplation is great, but they will undoubtedly require policing.

3.a If there is anything you don't agree with, or if you have any other suggestions, please state these

We would like the selection of sights to be linked with the overall strategy for how the story gardens fit into the city and how they can be discovered (wayfinding).

4. What would attract you to visit a story garden?

- Trails and activity in the space – new reasons to visit and dwell
- Context – what is available in the near vicinity

Also, these areas already exist. What prevents people from exploring them now?

- Clean, safe, green – safe and green is included in the aims above. We would add clean and tidy to the list.
- How will enforcement and cleaning be managed going forward?

5 and 5a. Do you agree with the aims of the routes and why?

No information provided on the routes in the consultation.

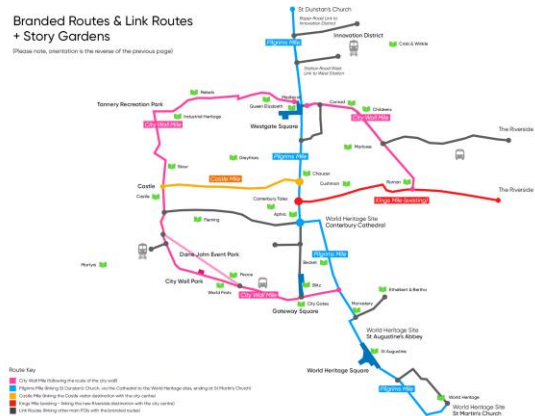
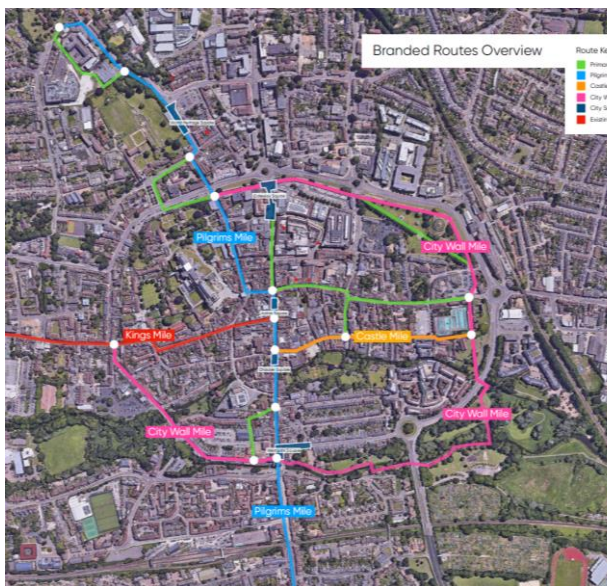
The Canterbury Tales of England masterplan provides extensive information about existing routes and suggested wayfinding interventions. Added to this would need to be information about the Quarters and the business offering in the city.

We believe the aims of the routes and wayfinding strategy should be to connect the city’s heritage, cultural and commercial offering, highlighting the existing and new experiences on offer.

So many people are unaware of the breadth and depth of what they could explore in the city. The focus on Canterbury BID’s networking events over the past year has been to encourage those of us who work locally to be tourists in our own city, and a number of times people said “I’ve been meaning to come her but never have” or “I didn’t know that businesses was here”.

Our current wayfinding is out of date and tatty. LUF provides a unique opportunity to refresh and connect both locals and tourists to the city’s past and present, bringing old and new. It has the potential to increase dwell time and spend, thereby improving overall occupancy and jobs.

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6. If there are additional points of interest and/or areas of the city you would like to see the routes explore, please state your suggestions

Please see the CTOE masterplan.