

SECRET CITY



Country / City United Kingdom, Cheltenham
University / School University of Gloucestershire
Academic year Conversion year
Title of the project Landscape Urbanism - 'Secret City'
Authors Caroline Walsh





PERFORMATIVE NATURE

Barcelona International Landscape Architecture Biennial

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SCHOOL PRIZE

X International Landscape Architecture Biennial

Máster d'Arquitectura del Paisatge -DUOT - UPC

ETSAB- Escola Tècnica Superior

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TECHNICAL DOSSIER

Title of the project 'Secret City'
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Title of the course Landscape Architecture - MA with conversion year
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Written statement, short description of the project in English, no more than 250 words

Lying on the banks of the River Severn, in the West of England, Gloucester has a proud thousand year long history reaching back to the Romans. Its streets star many beautiful buildings and there's a series of scheduled ancient monuments buried beneath. Yet for all its architectural riches, in the twentieth century the city suffered from poor planning decisions, with monolithic shopping centres destroying medieval street patterns and historic architecture. The city's economy has declined and social deprivation and anti-social behaviour are rife.

In the twenty first century Gloucester has come to resemble one of the Roman mosaics that lie buried beneath its streets - a series of beautiful fragments, scattered or hidden by subsequent layers of development. Concealed behind the city's façades are compelling stories of who built Gloucester - and why - but over time the linking narrative of the city has been lost. By creating a new story for Gloucester, Secret City will refocus attention on the historic jewels in the city's crown - both physically and virtually - encouraging people to look at their city from a new perspective - and fostering that rather Roman notion of civic pride.

For further information

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SECRET CITY

Gloucester has several competing 'centres'. The Norman Cathedral is a draw for tourists. King's square and Eastgate Shopping Centres attract the locals, and the Docks are a shopping destination for day trippers. A successful regeneration strategy will re-connect the three by retelling the story that links them.

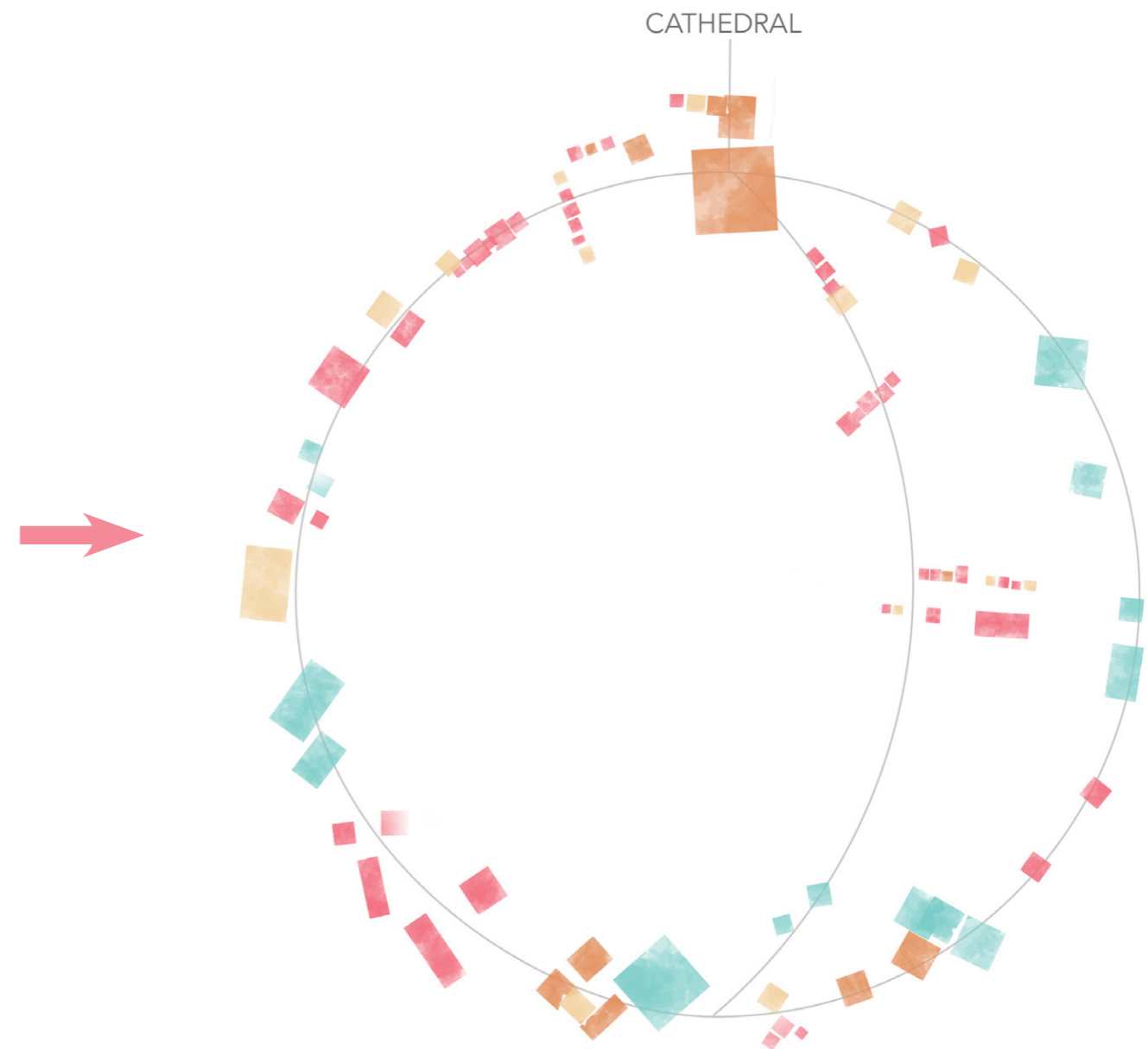
1 A SCATTERED MOSAIC

Gloucester's historic buildings and archaeological sites in their current state - scattered, unsignposted and with no linking narrative.



2 CONNECTING THE CITY

Linking key buildings and sites into an easy to follow circular, pedestrianised route will be the first step in retelling Gloucester's story.

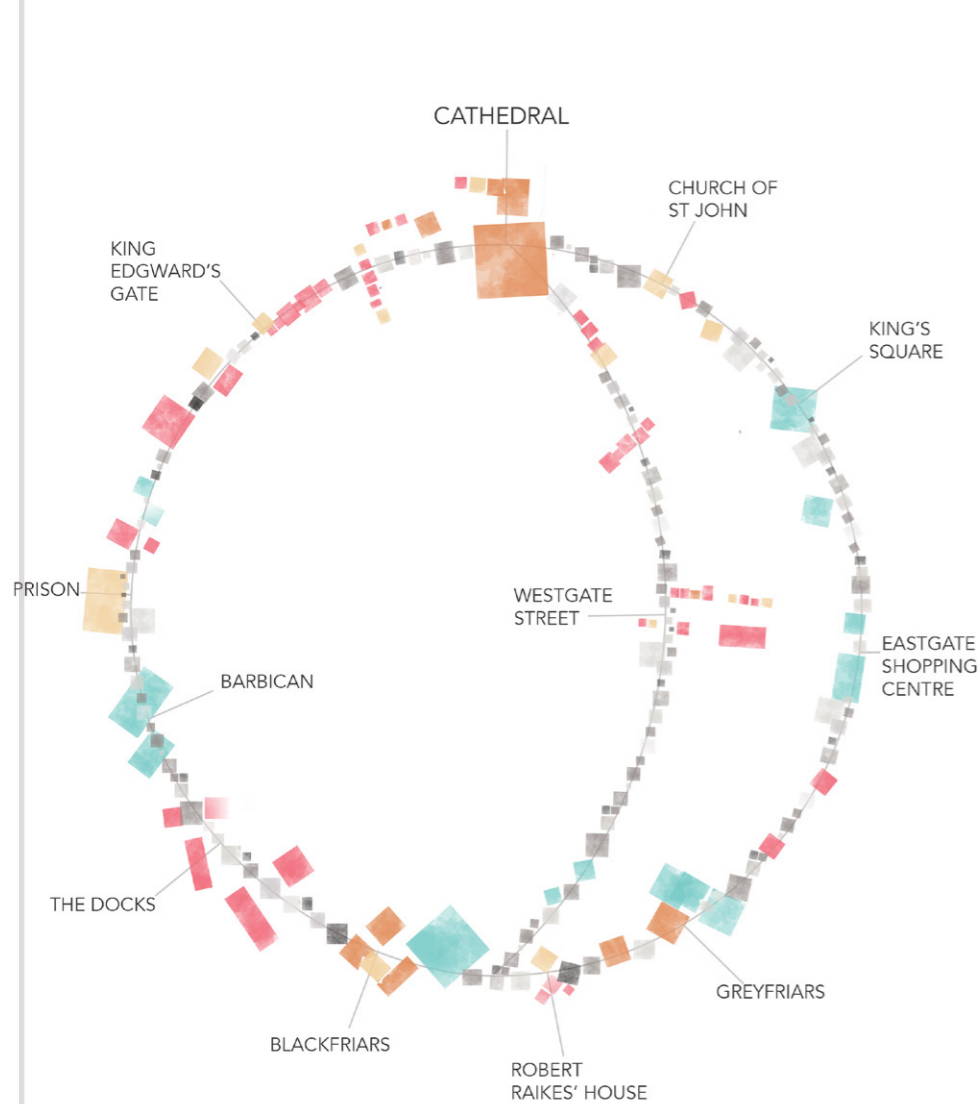


CONCEPT

Three design strategies invite people to view Gloucester afresh, ensuring there is something for locals, tourists and history buffs alike.

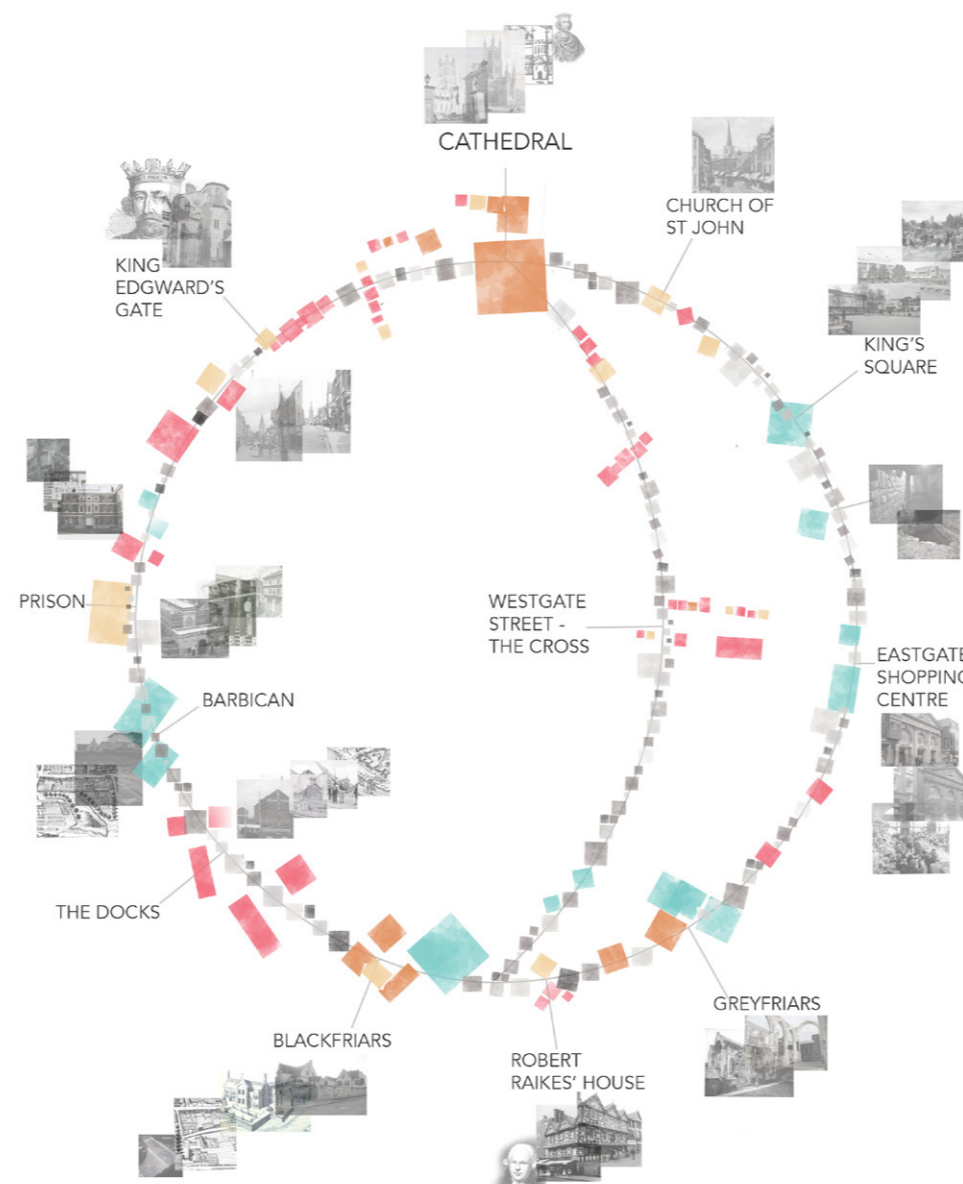
1 PHYSICAL

A distinctively paved circular route takes in the city's key historical sites, while also connecting Gloucester's disparate shopping areas with the Cathedral and Docks. The paving will be a contemporary take on the mosaic and will be linked at night by a thread of LED lighting. Key façades will be bathed in light.



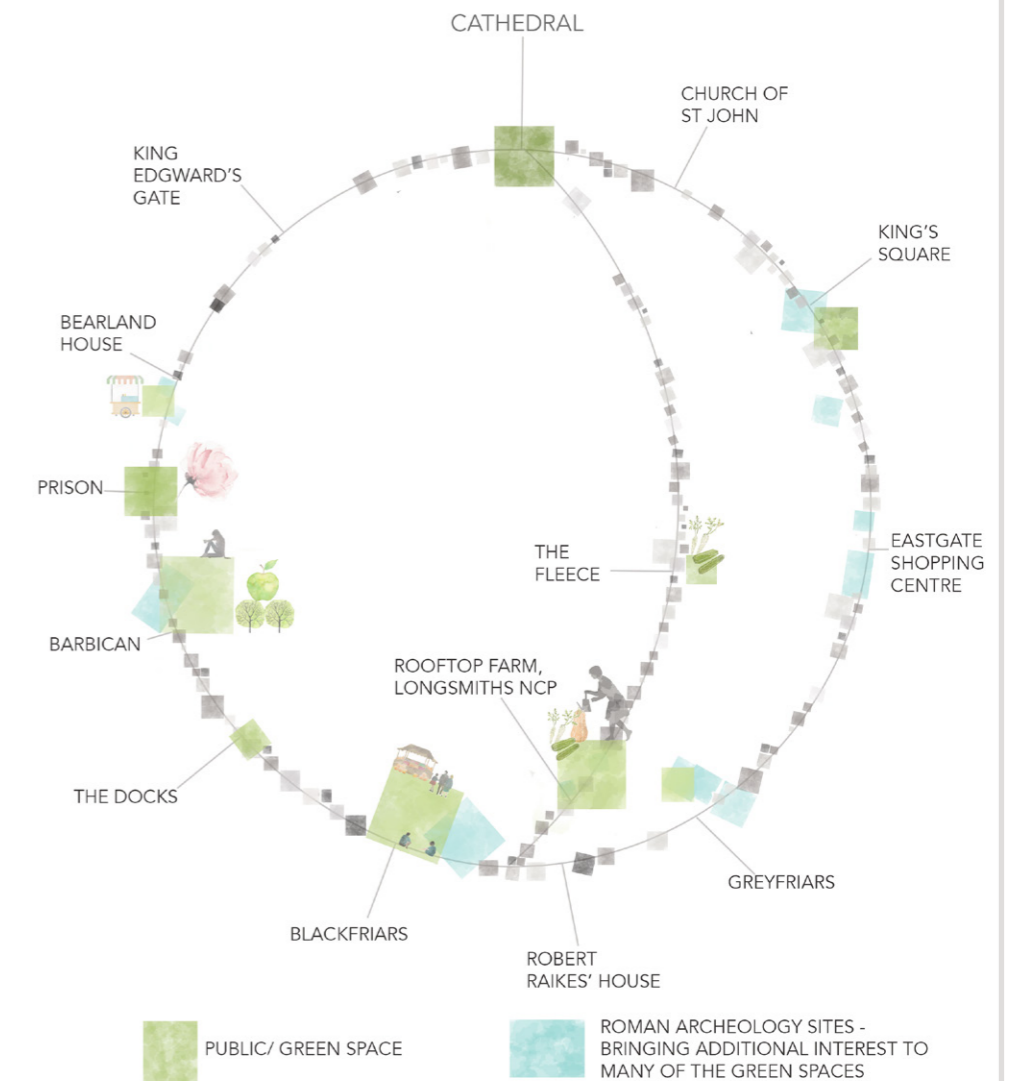
2 VIRTUAL

A virtual narrative will be mapped on top of the physical route. Much of Gloucester's story is hidden - behind faded façades or deep underground. Secret City's app will allow visitors to peel back the layers and access all areas - on their mobile phone. The Secret City app will provide a cinematic journey complete with evocative historic images - and a rich narrative and soundtrack.



3 GREEN

A network of beautiful green spaces will be created along the route. A community-run city farm will link them all, taking on underused spaces to grow fruit and vegetables and to run education programmes. Secret City farm work will become part of Gloucester's social prescribing project, helping to reduce mental ill health. By encouraging people to use the city centre, civic pride will be enhanced and regeneration opportunities enhanced.



MASTERPLAN



The masterplan shows how the design strategies would work in the city centre. The mosaic pathway signposts and connects the Docks, Cathedral and shopping centres - with the virtual layer an optional extra. New green spaces bring the city centre alive - encouraging civic pride and further regeneration.

- 1 A new pocket park is created when the mosaic path diverts into a contemporary take on a Roman mosaic - a hint to the villa buried nearby. Street food will be sold from carts lining the eastern wall - whose concrete walls will be greened.
- 2 The multi-storey car park will be converted into a multi-level city farm, with lower floors lit to ensure consistent food production. Classes in growing and cooking vegetables will be offered to school children and single parents.
- 3 The mosaic path expands to fill the space at the 'forum'- a contemporary take on the meeting and market places found in all Roman towns. The central area will be open allowing for a weekly farmer's market selling the produce from the city farm. The derelict buildings to the east will be converted into a community cafe selling community farm food, and on the wall above them photos taken by users of the Secret City's app will regularly be projected.
- 4 In a gentle nod to the mott and bailey castle that once gave the area its name, a stepped amphitheatre will rise at the bottom of the site. Rising above it is a pedestrian bridge providing a link straight into the prison - a key stop on the secret city app - and beautiful views of the city. A community orchard arcs behind the student accommodation.