

Richmond Town Centre Vision

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PRACTICE

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SUCCESSFUL PLACES ARE KNOWN FOR SOMETHING

Something for their community to feel proud of; something to contribute towards and cherish. Something deep-rooted; the defining essence of who they are and what they represent.

They seek to influence how people perceive them through **actions not words**. They galvanise and guide partners and communities through shared identities and values.

Every place, like every person, has an individual identity and a personality. It's these personalities that help us form an emotional relationship with a place – to truly engage with them.

They make us want to spend time there, to champion them, to support them and advocate for them. And when places have advocates, that's when they really succeed.

“Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any.”

Robert Merton Solow,
Nobel Prize Winning Economist

A VISION WITH PURPOSE, AMBITION & INTENT

This is a ‘Vision’ for Richmond town centre; one that its people and those working on behalf of the town can understand, enthuse about, and effectively advocate. It includes Place-shaping Pillars and Values with supporting narrative draws collected data, insight and research, and introduction to the ‘Place-shaping Filter’, a tool to put the Richmond values to work.

Note: this document is a ‘Vision’ for Richmond town centre and its surroundings (thereafter referred to as “Richmond”).

Richmond’s future success will come from all of us—public bodies, private enterprises, community groups, and individuals—working together with a shared sense of purpose. Distinctiveness isn’t achieved through catchy slogans or glossy promotional materials.

Our vision aims to foster pride and invite contribution. Capturing the defining essence that who we are and what we stand for, building on Richmond’s deep heritage and vibrant culture—not relying on superficial campaigns or short-lived promotions. Through this shared vision, we can shape how people perceive Richmond—not just with words, but through our actions.

For this vision to succeed, it takes all of us knowing who we are and who we want to be—and staying true to that. We don’t need to be modest, but we do need to be meaningful and authentic in everything we do.

This means focusing on our strengths and amplifying what’s great. Richmond has many assets—natural beauty, rich heritage, a vibrant culture—so let’s build on these qualities together. True place-making is about being ambitious for what’s possible, not pretending about what isn’t. Let’s acknowledge our challenges and work collaboratively to overcome them, while being honest about where we stand.

This vision rooted in intention, not invention. Simply stating that Richmond is a great place doesn’t make it so. But a promise, backed by action, gives us a shared mission, a purpose, and a common ambition to strive for. Together, we can bring this vision to life—making Richmond a place we are all proud to call ours.

HOW DID WE DEFINE THE VISION?

For a Vision to be effective, it’s vital that it’s based in pragmatism, built with aspiration. This is meant uncovering what already makes Richmond special and identifying goals for the future.

Our process grew from the in-depth study carried out by We Made That and documented in the 2023 [‘Richmond Town Centre Engagement Report’](#) which in summary highlighted five key focus areas in the town centre:

- 1. Roads & Public Space:**
Address traffic and improve public spaces to enhance movement and accessibility.
- 2. Retail:**
Diversify the retail and leisure offerings, creating a lively and inclusive town centre.
- 3. River & Riverside:**
Expand riverside activation with varied and engaging uses.
- 4. Young People:**
Enhance provisions for children, teenagers, and young adults.
- 5. Night-Time Economy:**
Activate and stimulate the evening economy by transforming policy into experience.

Additional engagement / consultation included:

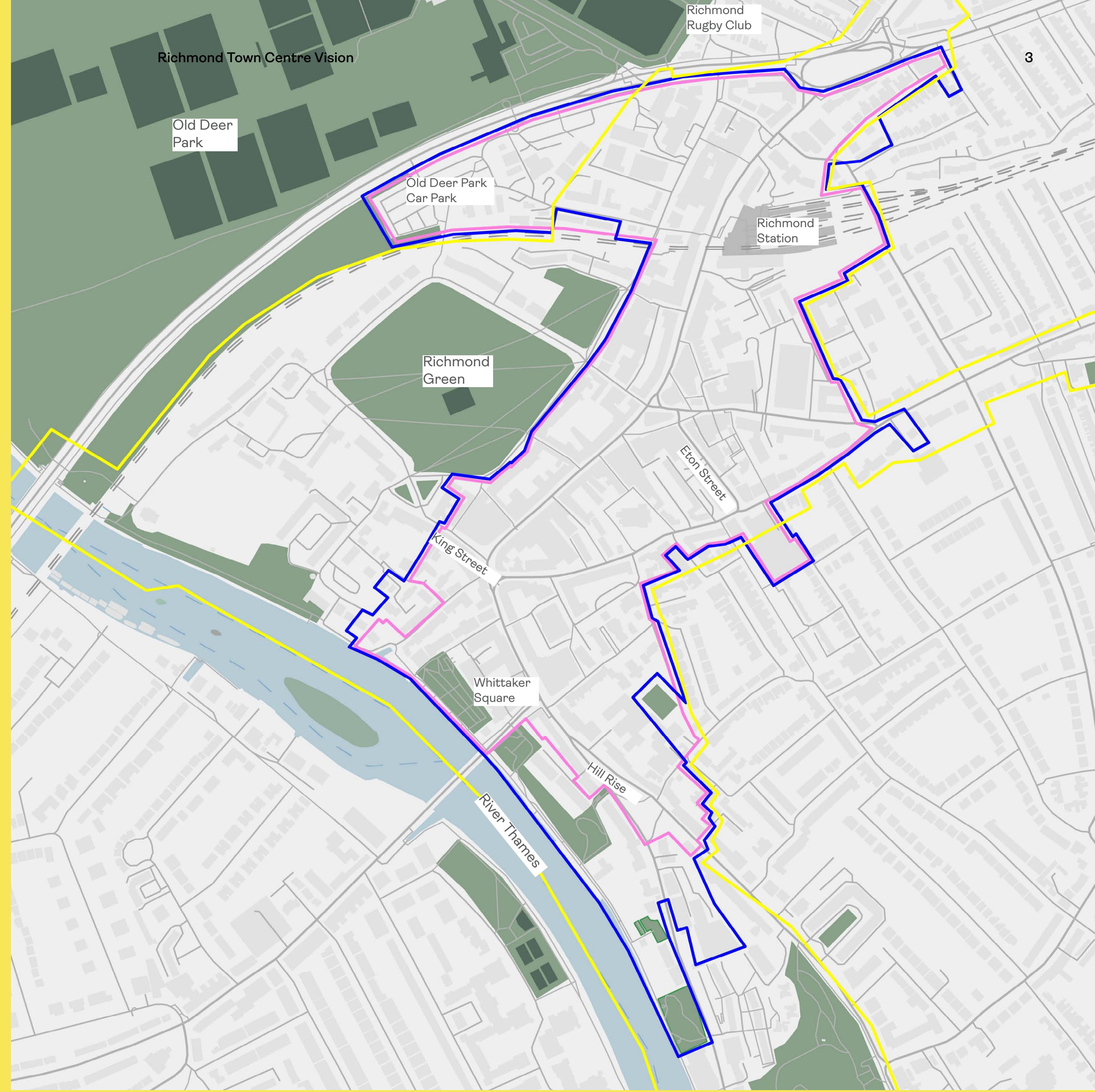
- Extensive desk research and literature review of policies, plans and data;
- A day-long charrette-style workshop with 16+ key stakeholders - which produced an Insight Report that influenced the Vision;
- Two workshops with senior officers from across Council departments;
- One-to-one conversation with Be Richmond Business Improvement District (BID);
- Workshop with elected members to critique the emerging vision.

A VISION WITH PURPOSE, AMBITION & INTENT

This work acknowledges the multiple ways in which the boundaries of Richmond town centre can be defined and interpreted.

Richmond's Local Plan establishes a working definition of the town centre (see image opposite), incorporating retail clusters, cultural amenities, and high-density housing, serving as a consistent reference point for the research area. However, there are areas beyond this defined boundary, such as Old Deer Car Park & Richmond Rugby Club, that we are considering as part of the town centre.

- Based on adopted Local Plan main centre boundary, 2018
- Based on emerging Local Plan town centre boundary, 2025 expected
- Urban Design Study character area boundary, 2021



POLICIES & PLANS AUDIT

This audit aligns current and emerging Richmond Council's policies with the Richmond Vision, supporting activation across key thematic pillars.

This table links to the key policy documents and future plans for the town and the borough which have geographical and/or thematic relevance to the Vision.

Policy Document	Key Extracts & Commitments	Relevance to Vision & Activation Plan
Corporate Plan 2022-2026 Author: Richmond Council	Focus on becoming a greener, safer, fairer borough, with sustainability, safety, and affordability as core priorities.	Emphasises the need for Richmond town centre to balance its heritage with a dynamic, inclusive future.
Culture Richmond 2021-2031 Author: Arts Service	Commitment to a diverse and innovative cultural sector with a focus on inclusivity, sustainability, and expanding Richmond's cultural identity.	Supports Richmond's cultural expansion and inclusivity focus, aligning with creative, vibrant activities.
Library Service Strategy 2022-2026 Author: Library Service	Promotes community involvement, cultural enrichment, and sustainable practices, with emphasis on in-formal learning and wellbeing.	Aligns with themes of community engagement, culture, and wellbeing in the Vision.
Richmond Local Plan (Adopted and Emerging) Author: Planning Policy	Vision for compact, connected neighbourhoods, emphasising climate action, local centres, arts, culture, and improved public spaces by 2039. Includes policies, place-based strategy updated site allocations and a detailed evidence base to guide decision-making.	Directly supports the creation of green, community-focused spaces and enhanced accessibility. Includes forecasts for retail & food and beverage floorspace and employment space needs relevant to the development of the centre.
Time to Shine: Night-Time Strategy Author: Richmond Council	Focus on growing Richmond's night-time economy, with heritage-linked events, safer public spaces, and diverse community activities at night.	Relevant for developing evening activations and enhancing the vibrancy of Richmond's night-time offering.
Air Quality Action Plan (Current, 2020-2025 & Draft 2025-2030) Author: Public Health	Commitment to improving active travel, monitoring air pollution, reducing vehicle emissions and reducing through traffic in Richmond Town Centre.	Supports a vibrant and social future for the town that sees a reduction in car dominance and improved health outcomes for all.
Richmond Arts & Ideas Fest 2025 Author: Arts Service	A biannual event that emphasises cultural reforestation and renewal of community relationships through cultural experiences.	Supports integration of culture and nature, enhancing Richmond Borough's unique character as a vibrant community space.
Richmond Conservation Area Appraisals Author: Urban Design & Conservation	Documents the intrinsic character and significance of Central Richmond, Richmond Green, Richmond Riverside	Important evidence base that details the local heritage areas to be conserved or enhanced.
Richmond Moves: For a Healthier Borough 2024-2029 Author: Sports & Leisure	Plan to make physical activity, leisure and sport a natural and accessible part of daily life in Richmond upon Thames.	Highlights the need to connect and make accessible the borough's network of parks and facilities for residents. Supports need for play space'

RICHMOND PLACE-SHAPING PILLARS & VALUES

Three honest (but aspirational) **Place-shaping Pillars** (each with its own story) that anchor Richmond's vision for the next 5, 10, and 15+ years - giving focus to the place and its people and setting it apart from other places.

The pillars are intended to deepen the town's unique character by blending local distinctiveness with bold ambition. These pillars offer a clear sense of direction, helping Richmond stand out by enhancing its core identity, building community pride, and guiding transformative change in the town centre.

Each pillar is supported by a set of shared **Values** and common goals that give substance to the theme by shaping behaviour and aligning decision-making, and actions taken in Richmond's town centre. Each value comes with a practical examples for implementation, illustrating how it will come to life in the community, along with a set of keywords that provide context and enhance its meaning.

Richmond Place-shaping Filter

Place-shaping Pillar 01

Global City Energy Meets Market Town Charm

Richmond is a town of striking contrasts, where the charm of a market town meets the vibrancy of a global city. It offers the serenity of the countryside within the bustling energy of London. Richmond's distinctive blend of green spaces, historic architecture, and the Lanes converge with a thriving technology scene to create a sense of cultural vitality. A hub for arts, independent retail, and creative spaces, Richmond fosters talent, celebrates its heritage, and inspires all who visit. Through dynamic cultural programming, partnerships, and a strong support for local businesses, Richmond promises a balanced, engaging experience for all.

Place-shaping Pillar 02

Space To Breathe: Escapism, Exploration & Enrichment

Richmond is a welcoming escape from the fast pace London, offering relaxation, exploration, and enrichment through its blend of riverside views, green spaces, and cultural activities that merge leisure, nature, and heritage. Richmond balances an inviting, high-quality charm with inclusivity, fostering spaces for all ages and backgrounds. From parks to entrepreneurial ventures, it creates opportunities for youth, encourages wellness, and promotes community through arts, sports, and cultural experiences, leaving visitors inspired and connected. Richmond's atmosphere encourages new adventures, learning, and lasting memories in a peaceful yet vibrant setting.

Place-shaping Pillar 03

Natural Leaders: Champions of Environmental Action & Social Value

Richmond upon Thames is committed to being London's greenest borough, inspired by its natural surroundings, from Royal parks to the Thames. As a "natural leader," it embodies bold, proactive environmental stewardship, promoting biodiversity, health, and sustainable living. The town is dedicated to prioritising people over traffic and sustainability over convenience, setting ambitious goals to address climate action, traffic, and air quality. Richmond seeks to lead by example with innovative, people-centered solutions, strong community engagement, and partnerships. It embraces change and pushes boundaries, positioning itself as a model for environmental action and social value, both locally and across London.

RICHMOND TOWN CENTRE

WHY IS PLACE-SHAPING IMPORTANT?

Successful place-shaping enables better decision-making and encourages cohesive behaviour that will help move Richmond's current place perception and lived experiences in the desired direction - activating the town's identity and positively influencing its reputation and profile, increasing recognition; creating desire and demand; and instilling confidence and excitement.

It will help build civic pride - making local residents feel good about Richmond town centre; attract new people to live and work here; drive economic growth and attracting further investment; retain young people in the area; or encourage local people to spend more time and money in the town centre.

SO WHAT'S THE AIM?

To:

- Guide and enhance perceptions
- Influence and shape lived experience

By:

- Encouraging cohesive 'on brand' behaviour and collective action
- Making decisions which are true to the essence of the place
- Sending a consistent and united message

USING THE FILTER: PUTTING THE PILLARS TO WORK.

The Place-shaping Filter is a hands-on tool turning values into a decision-making framework. It provides inspiration and a way to tests ideas or initiatives to make sure they align with our values, enabling collaboration and innovation to reach our goals for the future of Richmond town centre.

Use the Richmond Place-shaping Pillars and Values as a filter to assess proposed activities, ensuring they align with the Vision and communicate Richmond's identity effectively.

The filter helps identify impactful, "on-brand" actions that create a cohesive and distinctive image for Richmond. The stronger an activity aligns with the core values, the more it will shape Richmond's image in the desired direction.

Remember, the focus is internal—outsiders will judge Richmond solely by its actions, not the narrative behind them.

Place-shaping Pillar 01:

Global City Energy Meets Market Town Charm



Place-shaping Pillar 01: **PP_01**

Global City Energy Meets Market Town Charm

A place of **striking contrasts**. Where the charm of a market town meets the bustle of a global city - a London town in spirit and in location but owes as much of its appeal to the countryside as it does to the metropolis.

The rare blend and juxtaposition of a **buzzing market town and rural serenity**—characterised by our river, green spaces, topography, historic architecture, and street network (the Lanes)—**combined with the cultural vitality and modernity** of one of the world's great capital cities, gives Richmond a **unique wholesomeness**.

Home to businesses like eBay and PayPal, Richmond balances the charm of its natural and historic environment as an attractive employment centre.

Richmond thrives as a cultural destination, where **creativity meets community**. A vibrant array of **independent** shops, cafés, and restaurants, alongside established chains, and cultural experiences. Artists, and local makers are celebrated, while arts, theatre, and storytelling define Richmond's distinct cultural focus, and are appealing and accessible to all ages and interests.

A place of discovery, offering a rich tapestry of experiences, fostering talent, inspiring residents and **stimulating the minds and senses** of all who visit. As a vibrant leisure destination Richmond blends its rich history with a contemporary, diverse scene, offering spaces for markets, pop-ups, affordable workspaces, and **artistic expression**.

Supporting Values:

PP_01

CREATIVE, INSPIRING & STIMULATIVE

In other words:

**Original | Independent | Relevant | Dynamic
| Diverse | Interesting | Discovery | Serene
| Buzzing | Wholesome | Inspiring | Vibrant |
Artistic**

Consultee quote:

***“Full of discovery.” / “A place to enjoy before and after
a visit to the river, parks, and historic buildings.”***

What does it mean in practice?

- **Creative Identity:** Richmond will celebrate its history and heritage while integrating modern cultural elements, encouraging a creative ecosystem that nurtures artists, makers, and designers.
- **Embodying City Energy & Green Escapes:** Richmond will embody both dynamic city energy and peaceful, green escapes, offering a balanced urban experience.
- **Playful Exploration & Storytelling:** The town centre and riverside will incorporate playful elements and storytelling, infusing public spaces with interactive features that highlight Richmond’s history and cultural identity, creating engaging experiences for all ages. Uses for on the riverside will be carefully balanced and appropriate.
- **Animate Heritage with Contemporary Culture:** Efforts will be made to animate Richmond’s heritage while embracing contemporary culture and technology, ensuring it remains a living, vibrant place.
- **Support for Independent Retailers:** Championing local businesses, Richmond will foster a high street that is diverse, community-centric, and resistant to commodification. Independent shops and local enterprises will thrive through accessible retail and workspaces and collaboration.
- **Inclusive Cultural Hub:** Richmond will become a dynamic hub for music, arts, and community events, providing platforms for creative professionals and businesses to connect with wider audiences through markets, street festivals, and pop-up events.
- **Promoting Partnerships for Innovation:** Richmond will promote partnerships with modern businesses, ensuring its mix of tradition and innovation remains unique and relevant in today’s fast-paced world.

Place-shaping Pillar 02:

Space to Breathe: Escapism, Exploration & Enrichment



Place-shaping Pillar 02: **PP_02**

Space to Breathe: Escapism, Exploration & Enrichment

Richmond offers an escape from the intensity of London life, a retreat where people can relax, explore, be entertained and enjoy the Thames riverside and its abundance of green spaces.

Many of Richmond's stately homes and gardens were originally built for entertainment. Today, with rising demand for leisure activities and strong commercial growth potential, the future of the town centre is rooted in this sector. What was once a retreat for the elite is now an escape for all, offering culture, hospitality, heritage, wellness, and nature at its heart.

The town centre merges leisure, nature, and culture: creating a space that feels like a peaceful oasis yet is alive with social activity. A place to visit and leave inspired – learning something new and feeling enriched from having experienced something different.

Richmond is a beautiful, safe town where inclusivity and aspiration thrive. Connected to our riverside, we offer spaces for all ages and interests while balancing high-quality charm with a welcoming approach, ensuring everyone can enjoy our rich cultural, heritage, and public offerings.

Richmond provides opportunities for young people to fulfil their potential. Through play, arts, sports, and dining, the town encourages new adventures and deeper connections with its landscape and communities, creating lasting memories for residents and visitors in an enriching environment that promotes creativity and well-being.

Supporting Values:

PP_02

ENRICHING, ASPIRATIONAL & ACCESSIBLE

In other words:

**Diverse | Fair | Welcoming | Inclusive | Discovery
| Warm | Relaxing | Entertaining | An escape |
Peaceful | Alive | Beautiful | Entrepreneurial |
Connected | High-quality**

Consultee quote:

***“A feeling of healthy and relaxing respite.”
/ “Richmond needs better things for my
grandchildren to do.”***

What does it mean in practice?

- **Promote Equality & Equity** : Richmond will actively foster a welcoming atmosphere, making its public spaces accessible and its activities engaging for people of all ages and backgrounds, especially young people, disadvantaged groups, families, and people with a disability (both visible and hidden).
- **Fostering Human-Centric Spaces**: Richmond will focus on creating human-centric spaces that enrich life, providing both relaxing escapes and lively environments for social interaction.
- **Inclusive Discovery**: The town will offer more affordable and diverse activities, with a focus on intergenerational appeal and inclusivity, ensuring that everyone can explore and experience Richmond’s cultural and natural assets.
- **Prioritising Public Health**: Richmond will champion healthy lifestyles by prioritising public health—both physical and mental—through the creation of spaces, and activations that nurture well-being.
- **Cultural Connection**: Richmond’s heritage will be made more engaging and relatable, particularly for younger audiences, through storytelling and interactive experiences.
- **Building a Sense of Community**: Shared spaces will be developed to foster a sense of community, where well-being, inclusivity, and happiness are prioritised.
- **Balancing Peace & Vibrancy**: Richmond will balance peaceful areas with vibrant activities and intergenerational events, attracting people from across London.
- **Opportunities for All**: Whether it’s through arts, entrepreneurship, or community activities, Richmond will create an environment where people can pursue their aspirations, contribute to the local culture, and enjoy the town’s unique offerings.
- **Encouraging Exploration**: Visitors and residents will be encouraged to explore Richmond’s culture, nature, and history through new, creative activities that foster community engagement.

Place-shaping Pillar 03:

Natural Leaders: Champions of Environmental Action & Social Value

Place-shaping Pillar 03: **PP_03**

Natural Leaders: Champions of Environmental Action & Social Value

Environmental stewardship is central to our identity. Richmond upon Thames' goal is to continue to be **the greenest borough in London**. Inspired by our beautiful natural surroundings, with two Royal parks, Old Deer Park, Pools in the Park, our proximity to Kew Gardens and Thames-side location, Richmond is THE "natural leader" (i.e. the obvious and most qualified choice to **inspire and guide** others toward a shared goal with **vision, empathy, courage, and integrity**, fostering meaningful change) on issues of environmentalism, biodiversity, and health and well-being, committed to protecting our natural assets and promoting a green, healthy,

and sustainable future.

Richmond seeks to embody a bold, dynamic, and forward-thinking spirit, **embracing change and pushing boundaries** - particularly in relation to issues of environmentalism, biodiversity, and health and well-being.

By Championing sustainable transportation by prioritising public transport and active travel, Richmond remains accessible and inclusive for people with a disability, reduces carbon emissions, and promotes a healthier, more connected community.

Our people-centric approach aims to foster growth, **progress and innovation that benefit society**, ensuring that we **lead by example** locally and in the wider London context.

Supporting Values:

PP_03

BOLD, DYNAMIC, & AMBITIOUS

In other words:

**Visionary | Innovative | Benefiting Society
| Determined | Impactful | Open-minded |
Proactive | Productive | Green | Empathetic
| Courageous | Biodiverse | Dynamic |
Forward-thinking**

Consultee quote:

“Cutting-edge and risk-taking.” / “A source of ideas and energy.”

What does it mean in practice?

- **Leading London:** Richmond will lead by example, setting ambitious goals and taking innovative approaches to address pressing issues such as traffic management, climate action, and environmental sustainability.
- **Taking Bold Action on Climate:** The town will take bold, progressive action on climate change, air quality, and traffic management with vision, empathy, courage, and integrity, fostering meaningful change.
- **Embracing New Ideas:** Richmond will maintain a flexible, open-minded stance, encouraging experimentation and welcoming new perspectives that challenge the status quo.
- **Using Natural Beauty for Sustainability:** Leveraging Richmond’s natural beauty, the focus will be on inspiring sustainable living, prioritising biodiversity, green spaces, and low emissions.
- **Proactive Solutions:** By prioritising people and community, Richmond will tackle challenges with energy, addressing issues like pollution and vehicular movement through proactive initiatives and a “can do” attitude.
- **Collaboration & Connectivity:** Strong partnerships will be formed with like-minded organisations, fostering a spirit of collaboration to deliver community-led initiatives that promote unity and sustainable growth.
- **Community Engagement in Sustainability:** Richmond will encourage the entire community—residents, businesses, and visitors—to get involved in building a sustainable town that serves as an exemplar for London.
- **Develop infrastructure that prioritises active travel,** creating green pedestrian walkways and inviting active travel routes that encourage exploration, reduce emissions, and enhance connectivity across Richmond’s green spaces.

RICHMOND TOWN CENTRE VISION

1. Vision:

Captures the long-term purpose and desired future for Richmond town centre, focusing on a balanced, sustainable, and vibrant community where nature, history, and innovation intersect.

2. Ambition:

Expresses Richmond town centre's aspirations for recognition and leadership—aiming to set the standard as London's greenest, most welcoming, and culturally rich town centre.

3. Picture This:

Brings the vision to life with an immersive description, illustrating the vibrant experiences that residents and visitors will enjoy in Richmond in 15 years, from the sights and sounds to the unique cultural atmosphere.

WE HAVE A VISION FOR THE FUTURE:

Richmond will be a vibrant, inclusive town centre that seamlessly blends heritage with innovation, embodying both the charm of a market town and the vitality of a global city.

It will serve as a green sanctuary within London, where community, creativity, and sustainability converge. Richmond will inspire residents and visitors alike to explore, relax, and connect, creating a place that enriches lives and fosters a culture of environmental and social responsibility.

OUR AMBITION IS SIMPLE:

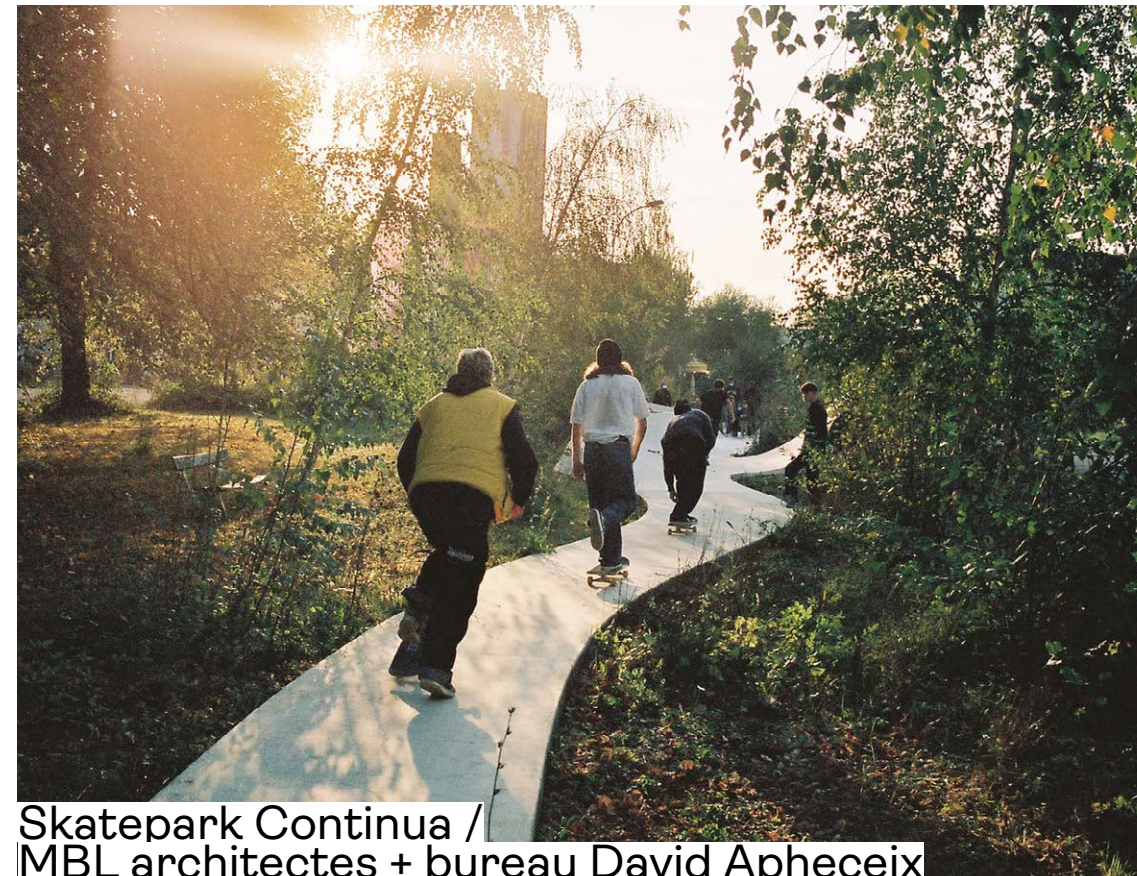
Richmond aspires to be recognised as London's leading example of sustainable urban community, known for its environmental stewardship, where the sounds of birds replace the noise of traffic, and clean air and pedestrianised spaces create a peaceful retreat. Richmond will be celebrated for its commitment to well-being, inclusivity, and a lively yet tranquil atmosphere that is both distinctive and welcoming.

Clean waters in the Thames, green infrastructure that prioritises active travel, and thriving independent retailers along the high street, Richmond will be known as a beacon of sustainability and a hub of cultural innovation. It aims to set a standard for integrating natural beauty with urban vibrancy, where diverse experiences— from arts festivals to green initiatives— support a diverse, flourishing community. Key spaces will foster community through environmental practices and accessible design, becoming a place where nature, heritage, and commerce converge.

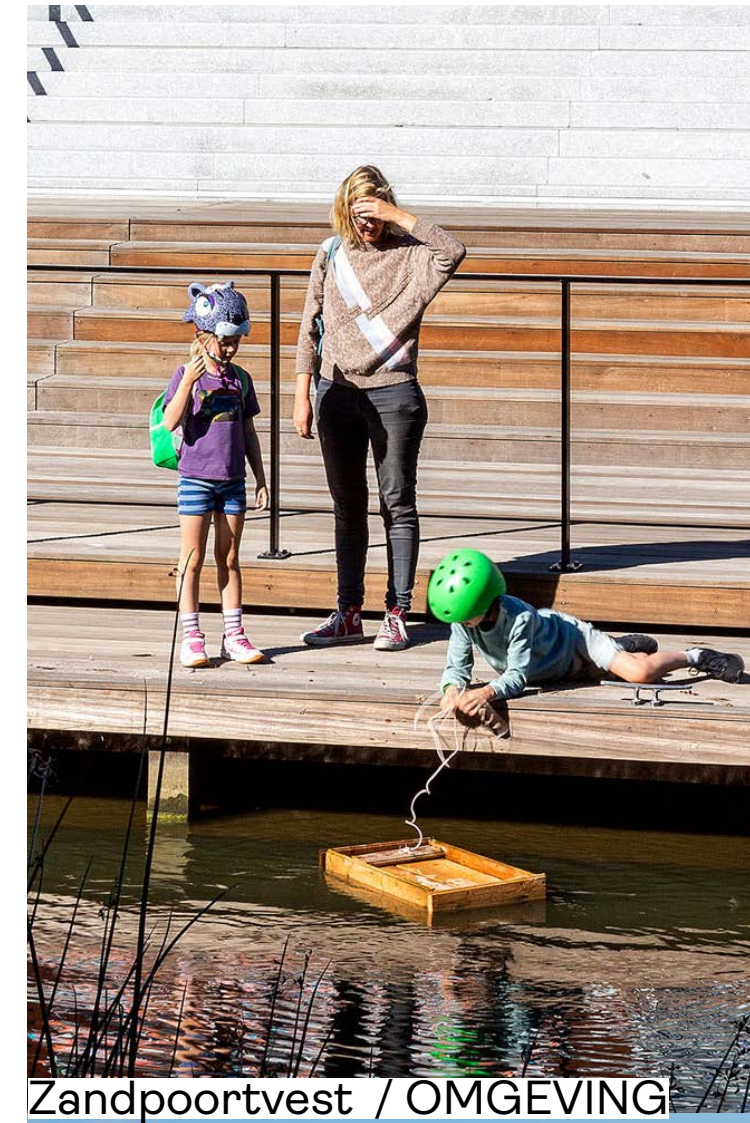
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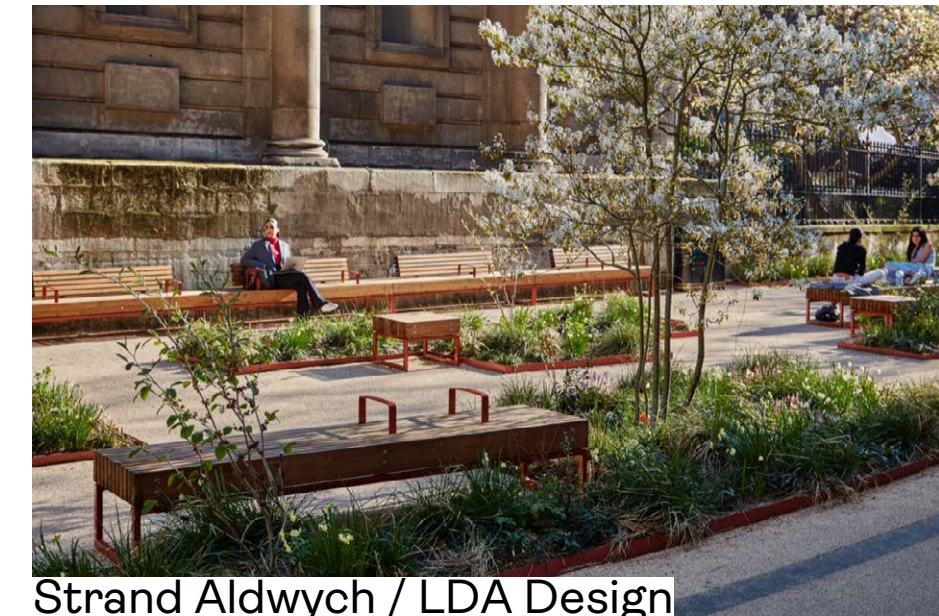
De Laat, Alkmaar / Bureau B+B



Skatepark Continua / MBL architectes + bureau David Apheceix



Zandpoortvest / OMGEVING



Strand Aldwych / LDA Design



Urban Village Fete / HemingwayDesign



Vallmora Park / Batlleiroig



Market Street Oxford / Urban Movement



London Play Streets



Jardin Flottant Niki de Saint Phalle / Paris



The Granville / RCKa



Pollen Market / Sheffield



Biodiverse Installation / Formafantasma

PICTURE THIS:

Visitors wander from formal gardens to intentionally ‘wild’ and playful public spaces, then on through The Lanes and streets lined with multi-layered planting, to experience the aroma of artisan coffee and fresh produce, and a town alive with events and culture day and night.

Laughter echoes from families exploring interactive public art, while children play in lush green spaces lining the riverside. People connect with nature through skateable public realm, child-friendly bug hotel workshops, and evening river dips at community saunas. Protected parks and biodiverse corridors provide clean, peaceful escapes, while green pedestrian walkways and active travel routes invite exploration.

Underutilised buildings have been reimaged into cozy cinemas, artist studios, and bustling markets. Independent shops spill out onto pedestrianised streets, buzzing with locals and visitors, and young entrepreneurs showcase their crafts in spaces designed for creativity and discovery. As dusk settles, lights glow warmly over outdoor cafés and restaurants, and the gentle sounds of live music fill the evening, continuing Richmond’s legacy as a cultural beacon.

It’s a place where everyone, from residents to visitors, can find a sense of belonging and leave inspired by Richmond’s vibrant blend of nature, history, and innovation.



*LONDON BOROUGH OF
RICHMOND UPON THAMES*

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UNTITLED
PRACTICE

urban
movement