

Our Gloucester Story

Gloucester is a spectacular and attractive surprise. A cathedral city located on the River Severn and fantastically situated between the beautiful areas of the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean. It is the most inland port in the country with a proud industrial past, evidenced by its Victorian architectural backdrop, whilst being rich with history from Roman times that you can see at every turn. It benefits from great connectivity by road, rail and water with the major cities of Bristol and Birmingham and the regency town of Cheltenham within easy reach.

There's no doubt that for many Gloucester comes as an incredibly interesting and characterful surprise as it is for many an unknown quantity, a bit of a one-off and a hidden gem. It combines history and modernity in an interesting, authentic and 'real' way with tremendous potential to grow and thrive. A compelling urban experience within a green oasis.

Our Gloucester story

Our story articulates the distinctiveness, character and characteristics of Gloucester; highlighting what makes it special and the opportunities for the development and promotion of the city and surrounding area. This overarching narrative consists of themes which are pillars and chapters of the story and a big idea that is the emotional purpose for the place. They represent what needs to be focused on for Gloucester to prosper. The thematic areas combine elements that are already important in the place alongside potential and lesser-known ingredients of the Gloucester experience.

harness and animate our history

Gloucester oozes history from every pore, it is a major part of its sense of place and the experience you encounter. The city has made every effort to project forward this vital part of its DNA with developments such as the Quays retail and leisure complex being situated in the old docks. Warehouses that once stored goods are now attractive apartments and the river hosts everything from pubs and restaurants to the college. Events and festivals make use of the open spaces no longer needed for industry, and history is celebrated at the History Festival and Tall Ships Festival. These wonderful urban spaces can be used even more to tell the story of Gloucester on a daily basis with street theatre, interactive public realm and storytellers; an animated everyday experience. Whilst the city has a thousand stories it isn't always easy to access them, they're down The Lanes, upstairs in a building, a mosaic on the floor; there needs to be joined up storytelling in every way to bring this textured story to life.

Gloucester, like many places, is a city of diverse assets and senses of place: the Quays, the Cathedral area, and the historic heart, which adds to the charm; but it is one place and it's important visitors and residents see and enjoy it all. The Cathedral is a standout visitor attraction, but like the Quays is almost a destination in its own right; join these together in what is a compact centre and you highlight and portray what is a multifaceted delight. This also provides the opportunity to communicate the future as a continuum of the past.

One of the first things that strikes you about Gloucester is industrial legacy and in rural Gloucestershire you find an urban experience which has been that for a long time. This wonderful disconnect with the surrounding area gives the place a very different feeling that reflects the way it is developing with university expansion into the centre and developments bringing in new people to Gloucester. The ability the city has, to celebrate its past without drowning in it and using this industrial gene for culture and a slightly edgier and youthful

approach, represents the next chapter in an amazing Gloucester story; the city is making a new history.

our place your stage

Gloucester is a place that is on a human scale and the very human sense of place filters through to you as you think about the lives and endeavour of those who have gone before, from Roman soldiers to merchants. The Cathedral, the docks, the warehouses and the river are a backdrop that has been just that for hundreds of years and thousands of people who have played out their own story, and that is happening again for a new generation.

The city is a melting pot of people from different backgrounds, ethnicity, cultures and communities, and this simply adds to the glorious texture of the place and the opportunities it has to prosper. Gloucester has a range of cultural activity which gives it verve and vibrancy even if it isn't always very visible; this will be enhanced by the university, Kings Square and Forum developments in the centre which will bring public space, leisure, performance, digital campus and people! There will be even more city centre living, and attractions for residents and visitors alike all contributing to Gloucester becoming a destination and hub within the region.

Alongside this it will be important to develop a space strategy which helps maximise the utility and opportunity of the urban and green open areas, reflecting the priority people now give to 'space' post-Covid. Equally, an events/storytelling strategy will help others animate the place, giving guidance to stakeholders and setting a quality threshold. This will help ensure that Gloucester is not only seen as a place for everyone to enjoy but that it delivers on this.

Gloucester will be an even more attractive proposition as a place to live your life to the full: studying, setting up a business, shopping, enjoying a night out, attending an event, watching the rugby or using the city as a base for exploring the wonderful landscapes of the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean. This is a city with a spirit and history that energises you, inspires you, brings out the best in you and captivates you with what it has and can achieve, and what you can achieve as part of it whether for a day or a lifetime.

the big idea for Gloucester

The Big Idea is an emotional and behavioural statement of intent for Gloucester and sits above and alongside the themes. It projects what the place is about, what it stands for and what is important. This isn't a strap line or marketing message, rather it is a 'strategic signature' for the city and area.

By changing our thinking, doing things differently, we can better utilise all our assets: radiating influence, building confidence, cultivating and encouraging strong leadership, developing new relationships; bringing business, community and place together.

Gloucester: experience and embrace the urban unexpected

Gloucester isn't what you expect and is all the more special for that. It is a sense of place with a compact combination of gems where the whole is definitely greater than the sum of the parts; industry, modernity, architecture, river, history, events and festivals, cathedral, shopping, urban and green spaces, university, countryside, enterprise, exciting developments; a wonderful tapestry of assets giving Gloucester the opportunity to be the experiential city.

Whilst Gloucester has majestic history that should rightly be celebrated it is the edgier, industrial, urban cool that has the potential to really set it apart and be a connector to culture and a younger generation. Part of the attraction is that the city is the urban oasis amongst a sea of glorious green and that disconnect is very compelling, providing complementary yet contrasting experiences.

There is also every opportunity for Gloucester to develop as an ethical, environmentally friendly and climate conscious destination reflecting the aspirations of many of its young people and tying into its cultural ambitions.

Gloucester offers an inspiring historic, industrial and changing backdrop for everyone who lives, visits, works or studies in this special place. It may not be what you expect but it will be what you enjoy and keep you coming back. It is the very antithesis of bland, it is a surprise around every corner, an experience to savour, it's authentic and great value in every sense.

Gloucester is the gift that keeps on giving