
Cabinet

2 April 2013

Report of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport & Sustainability

Reinvigorate York: Public Space Improvement Project for Kings Square

Summary

1. This report summarises improvement proposals for Kings Square. Design options were developed through an internal CYC working group and in working partnership with local business stakeholders. A public consultation has just finished and the findings of this analysed. The pros and cons of various design options are described and a preferred option proposed. Cabinet are asked to approve the preferred design option and proposed allocated project budget out of the already agreed funds of the overall Reinvigorate York programme.

Background

2. An overriding attribute to the continued success of the York economy is the desirability of the city as a place to live, work and visit. In order to have a strong York economy it is therefore essential to maintain and enhance the quality of our streets and public spaces otherwise people will simply not want to be here and the economy will falter. York must not be complacent- other cities have invested massively over the last 10 years and the competition from these cities is real and growing.
3. To help address these issues on 4th September 2012 Cabinet approved the expenditure of £3.3m for a programme of works to invest in our city streets and spaces over the next 2 ½ years.
4. Kings Square was identified in that programme as being one of six city centre priority improvement projects. The six projects are:
 - Kings Square
 - Parliament Street (including Piccadilly/ Coppergate junction)
 - Exhibition Square/ St. Leonard's Place/ Bootham Bar
 - Fossgate/ Pavement/ Whip-Ma-Whop-Ma Gate
 - Duncombe Place/ Blake Street
 - Micklegate

Reinvigorate York will also deliver improvements to access controls at the gateways into the footstreets, a programme of lighting improvements & a wayfinding initiative, together with opportunities to enhance existing maintenance and capital programme works where agreed suitable.

5. Reinvigorate York has a board chaired by Sir Ron Cooke and a City Design Group working group chaired by David Warburton. The Reinvigorate York programme implementation lead is Andy Binner. The project manager for Kings Square is Guy Hanson.

Consultation

6. A public consultation was held between 4th Feb and 25th Feb 2013. For a full summary please refer to **Annex 1**. Key events were:
 - Guildhall Ward drop in session attended 28th Nov 2012
 - Business users Stakeholder group set up and workshop held 7th December 2012
 - Second business users Stakeholder meeting held 1st Feb 2013
 - Public consultation started 4th Feb 2013.
 - Presentation to CAAP 5th Feb
 - All day public drop in held 8th Feb at York Explore library & learning centre
 - Meeting blind and partially sighted representative 21st Feb
 - Public Consultation ended 25th Feb 2013
7. How the consultation was structured: The two key documents were a leaflet and exhibition boards (still available through a web link embedded in the page www.york.gov.uk/reinvigorateyork). Both of these were readily available in paper and electronic versions. These described what we thought needed improving and how we were proposing to improve them structured under the headings of four themes. A core design proposal was drawn up and described together with two further variation options. Direct questions were asked in the leaflet about trees; the raised burial area; cafe seating. However, the consultation encouraged feedback on any subject. It has been subsequently drawn to the author's attention that disabled parking should have been a direct question. The decision at the time not to do so was because none of the proposals advocate changing the blue badge status of the road in Kings Square.
8. How the consultation was analysed: 196 written replies have been received. These are recorded in two spreadsheets (**Annex 2 & 3**) and then analysed in a further spreadsheet (**Annex 4**). Annex 4 groups the feedback under popular topics. There is too much detail to describe all these topic comments in this text

and so Annex 4 should be referred to separately if required. The summary statistics of the *structured questions* are set out in table 1 below:

Table 1		Structured Question description	people	percentage
Trees:	1a	Remove & replace further out to the road to create a larger square	64	38%
	1b	Leave where they are	73	44%
	1c	neither	18	11%
	1d	No opinion	12	7%
Raised Area	2a	Remove it to create a level ground area to create a larger square	43	26%
	2b	Refurbish it	91	55%
	2c	neither	19	12%
	2d	No opinion	11	7%
Cafe Seating	3a	Support including it in the location shown	70	42%
	3b	Support including it but in another location	2	1%
	3c	Do not want cafe seating anywhere	82	49%
	3d	No opinion	12	8%

9. Comments on structured question results:

- Trees: Analysis of these results show that people were marginally in favour of keeping the street side trees (44% keep; 38% replant). It is worth noting that a question was not asked about removing the trees completely. Whilst some people suggested this idea in their responses it was not a significant proportion.
- Raised Area: A significant proportion of people were in favour of keeping this (55% for; 26% against). The reasons were mostly because it is a feature that makes the square unique; also the way it contributes to the

successful function of the square for performers; and also because of the social & historic link the raised area makes with the pre-existence of the church.

- Cafe Seating: People were marginally in favour of not having a cafe (49% against cafe seating; 42% for). This is significantly different to the overwhelming public opposition to the proposed cafe planning application in summer 2012. This change in opinion is probably because the proposed siting is much more on the fringes of the main space.

Comments on Disabilities:

- Disabilities: 9 people wrote in requesting more disabled parking in the square. The singularly most popular topic for comments were about reducing the impact of vehicles although only 11 people made explicit reference to supporting the proposed disabled parking proposal. 12 people wrote in requesting more a draconian approach to disabled parking (usually removing it). We have had positive feedback from a blind and partially sighted user (YBPSS campaigns group representative) assessing the design proposal from a mobility impaired pedestrian's perspective. We have also checked compliance with York Dementia without walls project guidelines.

Options

10. Option 1: This is the preferred final design. It is illustrated in **Annex 5**. Key points are:
 - (A) Repaving: Repave the entire area with new materials and create a raised table at the main road junction.
 - (B) Trees: We propose not to replace the two trees on the roadside.
 - (C) Raised Area: We propose to retain and refurbish the Raised Area.
 - (D) Cafe seating: We propose that the council should apply for planning permission for cafe seating in Kings Square¹
 - (E) Disabled parking: We propose to continue with the consultation design for disabled parking.
 - (F) Paper Mulberry tree: is removed
11. Option 2: Each of the recommendations of the key points of the preferred final design could have an opposite design approach. The alternative design could therefore be a combination of either Option 1 or Option 2 for each point. These opposites are:

¹ Refer to the Analysis section for details of this conditional point.

- (A) Repaving: Do not repave the entire area or create a raised table at the main road junction
- (B) Trees: Replace the two roadside trees with two further out to the road
- (C) Raised Area: Remove the Raised Area.
- (D) Cafe seating: Do not have any cafe seating
- (E) Disabled parking: Apply for a traffic order to restrict disabled parking in Kings Square
- (F) Paper Mulberry tree: is retained

12. Option 3: Do not implement this improvement project or just implement it in part.

Analysis

13. Option 1 is the preferred final design. The recommendations of Option 1 are based on a thorough analysis of public consultation results and discussions with specialist council officers. The analysis below of the reasons for Options 1 will explain why Option 2 or 3 is not desirable.

- (A) Repaving: Repave the entire area with new materials and create a raised table at the main road junction. Reasons: Many of the existing surfaces are damaged, worn and uneven and need replacing. It is not possible to relay existing materials to a high standard of workmanship neither is it possible to achieve a high standard of workmanship with reclaimed natural materials. Sub-bases construction needs improving throughout and the performance of new surface materials needs to be of known criteria to minimise future damage from vehicle overrun. Only a complete repave with new materials can achieve this. The road is paved in a language of materials suitable to emphasise pedestrian priority. The raised table will create a transition into the level surface of Kings Square.
- (B) Trees: We propose not to replace the two trees on the roadside. Reasons: A ground radar survey was completed recently. This indicates that it is not possible to accommodate reasonably large replacement trees further out towards the road without a significant amount of service diversions. This would cause delay and cost overruns. Some objections were also received about how the lower tree canopy of a less mature replacement tree could restrict views towards the Minster.
- (C) Raised Area: We propose to retain and refurbish the Raised Area. Reasons: Overwhelming public opinion favours this. We propose that it will need a quite radical rethinking to make the raised area a more positive and useful feature, perhaps with tiered steps and seating. If necessary, this should cut into rather than expand the footprint of the raised area.

- (D) Cafe seating: We propose that the council should apply for planning permission for cafe seating in Kings Square (as we have for St Sampsons Square) in the location shown on the consultation option but that we should not implement licensing until the refurbished square has been in use for a long enough period to be confident that cafe seating can be accommodated. Reasons: Kings Square is a small space with a lot going on. It is difficult to assess on paper if cafe seating will work and so it is prudent to wait. Public opinion favours the proposed location (over a central location) and so, should it be licensed, it should go in this location. If this is done then other, unpredictable, third party planning applications should be easier to refuse.
- (E) Disabled parking: We propose to continue with the consultation design for disabled parking. Reasons: The York Access & Mobility Audit consultants recently advised that there are potentially irresolvable conflicts between the provision of disabled parking in the city centre and the impact of this on pedestrians especially those with mobility impairments themselves. This scheme attempts to replicate the feel and access permissions of St Helen's Square. It does not ban disabled parking in the square (it is part of the blue badge zone) but it encourages people not to park in the square by the design layout and language of paving materials that make it feel like a pedestrian space. It is possible that some consultation replies misinterpreted the design proposal to sign two disabled parking bays at the south end of the site as indication that they are not allowed to park elsewhere. It is hoped that blue badge holders will default to using the marked bays and, if these are full, that they would seek to park elsewhere, as a preference to parking in Kings Square. However, they will not be banned from parking in the square in this proposal. It is possible that the flat level surface we are proposing will encourage higher levels of disabled parking in the square. Should this prove the case then other regulatory measures should be considered at that time to prevent this happening because this would run counter to the objectives of the design brief.
- (F) Paper Mulberry tree: is removed. Reasons: The tree is healthy but completely inappropriately sited on an unattractive raised brick drum on top of a degraded raised platform. It needs to be removed to achieve the design objectives of refurbishing the raised area. A similar replacement tree will be planted elsewhere in the city (location to be agreed).

The Council Plan

14. The project supports Council Plan priorities for creating Jobs, Growing the Economy and supporting Ambition 4 in the York Economic Strategy, that of a world class place.
15. The project carries out the Cabinet agreed Reinvigorate York objectives of an improvement project for Kings Square

Implications

Financial

16. This project will be funded out of the Cabinet agreed Reinvigorate York programme budget. There are therefore no additional financial implications of this paper.

Human Resources (HR)

17. There are no HR implications.

Equalities

18. Specialist access consultant- Centre for Accessible Environments, produced a City Centre Access & Mobility Audit and summary recommendations document. This design proposal is based on the principles of their recommendations.
19. An initial risk assessment meeting has been held to develop a design strategy to achieve improvements for the visually impaired.
20. Communities of Interest have been encouraged to participate in the public consultation. The most affected group will be the visually impaired and the design team met a member of York Blind and Partially Sighted Society (YPPSS) and received positive feedback on the design proposals.

Legal

21. Refer to "Property"

Crime and Disorder

22. The proposals will create improvements to the appearance and function of Kings Square. This will encourage less anti social behaviour. Improvements to lighting will also have a significant positive impact in the use of the space when it is dark.

Information Technology (IT)

23. There are no legal implications

Property

24. Part of the site was formerly occupied by a church and graveyard. Records indicate that the Church of England still maintains legal title of part of the site and through this technically exercises control of these parts through its legal process called the "Consolatory Court". The current agreed use of the site dates back to a 1936 "faculty agreement" issued by this court to the (then) Corporation of the City of York.
25. The design team are in discussions with the Diocese of York (DOY) concerning potential restrictions. A meeting with the DOY is scheduled for 15th March.

Risk Management

26. The main project risks were identified in the Project Initiation Document (PID) at an early design stage.
27. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the residual risk score all risks has been assessed at less than 16, This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

Recommendations

28. Cabinet are asked to approve the preferred design Option 1 and a proposed allocated project budget of £490,000 out of the already agreed funds of the overall Reinvigorate York programme.
29. The reasons for this are:
 - The benefits of the design are described in paragraph 11
 - To carry out an agreed improvement project.
 - To ensure adequate budget is allocated to this project and remains for other projects.
 - To avoid delay and potential risk of not completing the Reinvigorate York programme.

Contact Details

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Report Approved	√	Date	20.03.2013
Wards Affected: Mostly Guildhall, but impacts on all			All √
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Background Papers:

- Cabinet Paper 4th September 2012: “Reinvigorate York- Investing £3,300,000 in the City Centre”

Annexes

- Annex 1: Public Consultation Plan
- Annex 2: Public Consultation Results Spreadsheet 1 (**online only**)
- Annex 3: Public Consultation Results Spreadsheet 2 (**online only**)
- Annex 4: Public Consultation Results Analysis
- Annex 5: Preferred Final Design Option

[Copies of Annexes 2 and 3 available on request]