

Jubilee Square Consultation - Stage 2 Concept Design

1. PUBLIC RESPONSES

The public were invited to give their views on the concept design via the consultation website. This generated 143 responses, a relatively low level of response compared to the initial consultation.

The response to this consultation was mixed, with some people broadly in favour, whilst having some reservations about the design detail. Some respondents were against the principle of the proposal, and specifically expressed concerns regarding a lack of parking.

Comments on the proposed design:

The most commonly expressed concern was that there were not enough features of interest in the scheme.

- Not green enough, not enough flower beds and screens should be made of tress or made of wood with planters not metal or glass.
- No connection with the roman/medieval/Richard III historic location. The design should celebrate this more (public artists providing high quality interpretation).
- Water feature would provide calm, animation and be popular, especially with children.
- Families with children have still not been considered and not having some sort of discrete appropriately designed play equipment is a missed opportunity for city.

Concerns were also raised about the relocated park and ride bus stops and that they would not function properly (Causeway Lane suggested as alternative).

Concerns were also raised about the loss of parking.

Whilst some respondents were positive about enhanced cycle routes, there was some concern about the potential for pedestrian/cycle conflict.

2. LETTERS

Bar Sandwich (abridged)

Main concerns are access, parking and outside seating:

- Previous works came with assurances that an unmarked loading bay on Highcross Street would remain so that businesses could still take deliveries and function. This was not honoured. The unmarked loading bay at its current position should be maintained.
- Allow enough room for exterior tables and chairs to be positioned on both frontages, close enough to Bar Sandwich to be recognised as ours.

Petitioned against the mature tress being felled in 2009, although they recognise if trees are to be felled to make way for more generous planting this is potentially a good thing. A tree planting review should be made public highlighting the net benefits of removal and planting.

Management of the area is more important than the design. It should be someone's task to ensure that every week there should be something at the square to attend, either organised by a local society (e.g. Chess Marathon) or commercial venture (e.g. ice rink).

Leicester Rutland RMT (abridged)

Fully support the ideas of regeneration and connection with heritage to improve image and to support commerce.

Urgent need for traffic enforcement cameras along the new Highcross Street taxi rank to stop the facility being predominately used by private hire firm and becoming overrun and chaotic if not enforced.

There should not be any lay-by from Vaughan Way to Highcross St, because they are mostly abused.

Public conveniences should be built nearby to support increased footfall - there is a lack of facilities in the city.

Small bike park and/or bike hire (Jubilee Square - train station - Charles St).

Clear signage and historical interpretation.

Leicester Civic Society (abridged)

Trees should be respected - they are living things. Retention of tress on Applegate. The mature London plane must be retained.

Concerns over the solid screening. Careful tree planting would be better.

Historical interpretation – the history of this part of the city will need to be explained (recommend 4/5 panels).

A clear demonstration of the forum's extent would take visitors back to the very beginning of Leicester. Its outline should be subtly indicated in the design of the new square. A simple cross of setts should be used to indicate the centre of the forum.

It is a pity that water does not form part of the design. We would like to see a fountain incorporated.

Wesley Hall

Applegate entry point should be enhanced and encouraged in preference to the diagonal path across the middle of the square. It also offers a route to Castle Gardens via De Montfort University, and the walkway down Southgates to the campus could be made more inviting.

Concern that the route from the square to the Castle Gardens diagonally over to Castle Street does not invite people to find it, whereas Applegate invites you to explore further.

People in cars should be able to enjoy views into the square. They should benefit from the 'marketing experience', so we therefore question the erecting of screens that will impede the view into the square. The screens may also separate bus passengers from the square. A good number of people coming and going makes for a more fluid experience.

The London planes should be kept and pruned back rather than felled.

We have concerns that cyclists will be encouraged to move more frequently and at more speed through quieter pedestrian areas.

Leicester Disabled Peoples Access Group & Inclusive Design Advisory Panel

Notes also informed by Access Group officers, Eric Day of IDAP, and Fiona Hind of Vista (Society for Blind People)

Detailed notes have been submitted regarding the following headline issues:

- Shared uses
- Layout
- Level Changes
- Surfaces
- Furniture and other features.

On-going engagement has been established to work through the detailed comments.

Leicester Access Forum

The following specific issues were raised by the Forum:

There was concern over the loss of street trees present within the current layout of St Nicholas Place.

Clarification on the use of Applegate by vehicles was sought as it is proposed that Applegate would be used as a route for vehicles exiting Guildhall Lane. It was debated whether this was preferable to vehicles exiting via St Nicholas Place as is currently the arrangement.

The need for permeability through the square, and in particular for pedestrians using the bus stops on St Nicholas Circle was highlighted. The alignment of routes through the square with those of the previous street layout was suggested.

The potential uses of the square were discussed. The sections of Jubilee Square to be hard surfaced could be used for events. There was a fear that the area could be misused by skateboarders but management of the square and use by other users could deter such activities.

Comments received from Mr A Brooks

Objection to the use of Applegate for vehicular traffic, including objection to the removal of tress, replacement of the existing surface and the impact on Wygston's House from large vehicular traffic exiting Guildhall Lane. Object to the loss of carriageway between High Street and Applegate.

Overall objection is that cost is being incurred to replace an existing pedestrian surface along Applegate with a vehicular access, whilst an existing vehicular access between High Street and Guildhall Lane is being replaced with a pedestrian surface.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 26th November 2012

Minutes of this meeting which considered and commented on the Jubilee Square are available at:

<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=654&MId=5382&Ver=4>

3. METHODOLOGY

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	DETAIL
Inclusive Design Advisory Panel	19 th Nov 12:30pm
Leicester Disabled Peoples Access Group	20 th Nov 2.00pm
Cycle City Workshop	21st Nov
Open sessions Wygston's House	26 th Nov 4pm-6pm
Open sessions Wygston's House	27 th Nov 12pm-2pm
Local Access Forum	27 Nov 5:30pm Town Hall
Open sessions Wygston's House	28 th Nov 4pm-6pm
Open sessions Wygston's House	29 th Nov 12pm-2pm
Retail Forum	4 th Dec
Conservation Advisory Panel	5 th Dec
St Nicholas Place Traders	Letter to traders inviting them to open meetings
Lanes Traders Association	Letter to traders inviting them to open meetings

Screens at our libraries and museums showed the video fly-through with additional explanatory text throughout the consultation.

Concept design leaflets signposting people to the consultation website we distributed to 41 public-facing council venues throughout the city.

The public were invited to register their views through the consultation website.

4. CITY MAYOR RESPONSE

The consultation on the concept design for Jubilee Square closed on 19th December. Comments have been considered as part of the preparation of the planning application. The detailed scheme has since sought to address many of the issues raised:

1) Nature of the space

A key objective of the scheme has been to create a space that will appeal to families and children. The lawn spaces will provide places for play where young children can run around in a safe environment.

The space has been designed for specific events. A large level stone paved area has been designed to accommodate large events infrastructure – for example an ice rink, marquee or a big wheel. The lawns and their seating edges can also become part of a larger events space with the potential to host festivals or specialist markets to fill the entire space.

The space will also have a co-ordinated lighting design adding night interest to Jubilee Square. The design uses level changes to minimize the impact of traffic on St Nicholas Circle, and also to form south facing seating edges overlooking lawn spaces.

Garden spaces will be created outside Wygston's House and along the western boundary. The garden design will include ornamental grasses, herbaceous species, as well as specimen trees.

2) Trees

There are a number of trees in St Nicholas Place at present. They are arranged in two principal groups, the first in a raised planter adjacent to the buildings on the northern boundary of the site, and the second group along the western boundary. Although the trees provide greening of the space they are generally not particularly good specimens or best suited their situation.

The trees along the northern boundary are both large and close to the buildings' frontage and currently obscure views of the upper part of the buildings as well as views from the buildings themselves. The London plane tree adjoining the northern boundary of the square is a good specimen, however due its size, retaining it would impact on the proposed layout of the space. Removing the trees from this frontage allows the buildings and uses to integrate with the new public space, and allows a line of vision from High Street through to St Nicholas Church and Jewry Wall. Removing the trees from this boundary also allows for the raised planter to be removed.

The trees on the western boundary are small species and will not grow to sufficient height to provide a sense of enclosure. It is therefore proposed that these trees are removed and replaced with taller growing species.

In total 23 trees will be removed. The trees will be replaced with a new tree planting strategy. 23 new large species trees will be replanted. In addition 22 smaller trees will be planted in planters along the northern edge of the square. This gives a net gain of 22 trees.

The tree planting concept for the square involves the use of three tree types:

- Tall, broadly conical, upright trees as accents in the paved areas;
- Tall, narrow, columnar trees in the garden on the west of the square; and
- Shorter, spreading, umbrella shaped multi-stemmed trees in the lawns and around Wygston's House.

Each tree species has been selected for its exceptional form, its stunning autumn colour, and its suitability for planting in this particular environment.

It is proposed that the trees within the paved area are *Liquidambar styraciflua* (American sweetgum). These are tall, deciduous, fast-growing, upright trees. Their palm-like leaves take on brilliant red, yellow, purple and green long-lasting colourings in autumn. They are pollution and frost resistant and thrive in urban environments. Ultimately, the trees will grow to up to 20 metres in height and around 6 metres in width. These trees will provide a strong accent within the paved area but set away from the buildings where they will have plenty of chance to grow to their full potential.

The trees on the western edge of the space will be *Carpinus betulus* 'fastigiata' (fastigate hornbeam). This cultivated form of the native hornbeam has a narrow, conical form and grows up to 15 metres in height and 4 metres in width. These trees turn a brilliant yellow in the autumn and, with a dense branch structure, continue to provide a strong architectural form, even when their leaves have dropped. The fastigate hornbeams will create a highly distinctive but visually permeable edge, particularly in association with the rectangular shaped architectural screen panels.

For the lawns and the garden outside Wygston's House, it is proposed to use single-stemmed *Amelanchier lamarckii* (snowy mespilus). These are broad, umbrella shaped small trees, which have a stunning yellow, orange and scarlet colouring in autumn. In the spring they bear a mass of white blossom. These trees will reinforce the garden character of the southern portion of the space, form a spectacular setting for the listed building, and complement the existing *Arbutus unedo* (strawberry tree) that will be retained.

3) A Water feature

A water feature was considered, however the cost of including such a feature in the scheme is extremely high. Whilst there are benefits of a water feature, and if done well these can form an attractive element of a public realm scheme, they do have disadvantages in terms of construction costs, and on-going maintenance and cleaning costs. Whilst consideration of a water feature was discussed at length with the design team it was discounted due cost and on-going management considerations.

4) Park & Ride Bus stops

The scheme will relocate two park and ride bus stops to St Nicholas Circle, adjoining the western edge of Jubilee Square. The proposals for Jubilee Square include strong pedestrian links which will provide links to the bus stops. The bus stops will adjoin a high quality landscaped environment and will be visible from the square.

5) Cyclist Provision

Jubilee Square has been designed to promote better city-wide connections for pedestrians and cyclists. Cycle parking and a new cycle route which crosses the square is proposed. The pedestrian/cycle route will have a minimum 4m width.

6) Northern edge of Jubilee Square

As single carriageway vehicular access to Highcross Street will be provided within a shared surface area there is a need to define the vehicle space and prevent stopping and parking. This will be achieved by coordinated street furniture (including planters) on either side of the route. This will also define the highway route, distinguishing it from the pedestrian space, which is essential for people with visual impairments.

7) Western boundary of Jubilee Square and Screens

The proposed screens are intended to provide some visual enclosure to the western edge but are intended to be sufficiently permeable to allow connection with the bus stops. They will be angled to allow traffic passing on Vaughan Way to see into the square. The design of the screens is subject to more detailed work, and this is a potential opportunity to create both a feature and possibly some historical interpretation. New tree planting is also a significant feature of this boundary.

8) Applegate

Applegate will be re-opened for limited service traffic exiting Guildhall Lane, and also to enable access to proposed blue badge parking to the rear of Wygston's House. This will require the removal of the 10 existing trees, and cobbles. It is not practical to retain these trees, which are in raised planters, in the design solution. Trees will however be replaced as part of the Applegate scheme, and these will be in tree pits rather than raised planters which will actually allow more appropriate specimens to be planted. 10 replacement trees will be planted. The cobbles are not historic in this location and were laid relatively recently; they are also a very difficult surface for people with physical disabilities. This proposed scheme has been designed sensitively, taking account of its historic surroundings, and it will be a lightly trafficked route.

Crossing improvements at the southern end of Applegate are proposed, together with wider pavements along Southgates which will enhance this as a route through to De Montfort University.

The diagonal path proposed across the square picks up an important desire line from High Street, and is considered a very important connectivity link to the edge of St

Nicholas Circle, where a new pedestrian crossing will also be introduced. This will be a route through to Castle Gardens.

9) Car Parking

The council's short stay car parking spaces at St Nicholas Place will be lost as a result of the Jubilee Square proposal. There is a good supply of car parking serving the area in nearby multi-storey car parks. Blue badge parking will be re provided to the rear of Wygston's House, on land within the council's ownership. The council does not have further land available to provide replacement short stay car parking, however council officers are in discussion with the NCP regarding the potential to create short stay surface level and ground floor parking in its St Nicholas Circle car park. Improved pedestrian crossings and enhanced pedestrian entrances are also being considered.