

Christchurch City Council Feedback

“Your Square, Your Place”

Regenerate Christchurch’s Proposals for Cathedral Square and its Surroundings

Consultation Period: 31st July – 21st August, 2017

Strategic Overview

This feedback, reviewed and supplemented by elected members, is aimed at giving a clear single statement of Council’s views, issues and questions that can guide Regenerate Christchurch in refining the recently published proposals for Cathedral Square and its Surroundings.

As a partner in the Project, Council has made available a range of disciplines to support Regenerate Christchurch in the production of the initial concept design. As part of the process towards publication of a Regeneration Strategy for the area by the end of 2017, a continued collaborative approach with a broader range of staff is encouraged to resolve identified matters of concern and to consider an effective delivery framework which can be integrated into the upcoming Long Term Plan process.

Informed by dialogue between staff and the Councillors Reference Group, the following ‘big picture’ matters warrant keeping at the front of mind for the project team as the process continues.

- a) **Building Consensus:** The Council fully recognises the inherent tension in transforming Cathedral Square and its surroundings into a place where people – local, national and international - want to be. The consultation concept has successfully started the debate about the balance we strike between the competing demands that include the appreciation of heritage values, providing for different types of events and it being a place for people to enjoy every day. As the process continues, we are keen to see that positive consensus is built around a final proposal so that stakeholders and ratepayers can have confidence in its delivery.
- b) **Heritage:** Cathedral Square is our city’s iconic heart containing heritage assets that contribute to our sense of place and reflect the history of our city. In building consensus around the final proposal, the Council urges closer dialogue with our own heritage advisors and the heritage community at large to ensure that in making spaces for us to enjoy in the future, we grant due respect to the status and appreciation of our city’s past.
- c) **Events:** Bringing events back into the heart of the city is an essential part of making it a place where people want to be - particularly the young people we need to retain for the health of our regional economy. But, developing a clearer understanding of how the proposed transformation of the Square will enable and enhance existing events, whilst recognising the potential (within the context of a city wide events strategy) for future events will be important as Council prioritises investment and delivery timing.
- d) **Beyond the Square:** Galvanising private investment across the whole subject area, which remains characterised by vacant sites and empty buildings, was a key objective for this project. A broader understanding of the intentions being pursued surrounding Cathedral Square and tools which might be employed to incentivise particular outcomes are important deliverables for the Regeneration Strategy.
- e) **Cost and Deliverability:** This concept stage consultation has opened the community’s eyes to new and exciting possibilities for the heart of the central city. However, as the primary delivery agency, Council will need to be reassured that Regenerate Christchurch has engaged the community on the scale of costs involved and the delivery timetable – particularly a staged programme that will align delivery with other projects including the Library, Convention Centre and significant private developments.

Specific Issues, Comments and Questions

The following sections summarise matters raised by Council staff as part of a cross organisation engagement process. Relevant teams have made it clear that they welcome further engagement with the Regenerate Christchurch team as the process continues.

The comments are structured initially around the five 'key moves' and subsequently under broader topic based headings (e.g. Heritage, Events, Infrastructure) given the more cross cutting issues that they cover.

The 'Key Moves'

Key Move 1 – Creating Lively Public Spaces

The intention to create a range of spaces to attract different uses and people was broadly supported with a range of comments making suggestions around design elements to help deliver this intention.

- General

- All the spaces need to have the potential to be performance or exhibition spaces (ranging from large scale events in the large areas to venues within the gardens where public art can be placed). Infrastructure (e.g. power, access) is needed to support these different activities.
- **All the spaces need to be designed with inclusivity in mind – earmarking one space for one group may discourage other users. Plan for 8 to 80 year olds and describe spaces by their uses not their target demographic.**
- **Everyday youth hangout spaces are important to provide.**
- Welcome youth but design to limit/guard against antisocial behaviour experienced elsewhere.
- The placement of the Cathedral in The Square had symmetry that should be maintained.
- Will provision be made for Speakers Corner?
- 'Living Room' market space is welcome but be wary of competition with the Peebles market
- Maximise light and sun and to minimise/shelter from the wind.
- A general lack of shelter and indicative seating areas.
- What activity will there be in the evenings to create a sense of safety and security – encourage bars and other forms of hospitality / entertainment.
- Need to ensure that the various spaces complement and don't compete e.g. Cathedral Square, Victoria Square, Performing Arts Precinct, The Terraces.

- Post Office Place / Event Space

- Would division of the single space into smaller ones compromise its ability to host larger events
- An alternative layout involving an east-west event space (taking in the proposed living room, cathedral frontage and the Convention centre courtyard) was proposed that would maintain a more open view of the Cathedral, maximise exposure to the sun and provide for a larger event space.
- Designs should safeguard the long High Street boulevard vista between Ara and The Old Post Office

- Library Space

- The central library will become a major attraction in its own right, seeking to inclusively serve all parts of the community as well as helping to activate this corner of Cathedral Square. There is concern that in signalling this could become a youth space (with suggestions around the installation of skate-park) this may – without careful consideration - act to deter visitors or particular age groups from using the library. It should be emphasised that the library is welcoming of youth (to the extent that it will include lockers to store skateboards and the like) but the stated intentions accompanying the concept may result in a clash of amenity expectations.
- The purpose and function of the space is unclear. Aotea Square might be a good reference point.
- Potential conflicts with future cathedral visitor centre/shop access arrangements

- **Convention Centre Courtyard - Concerns that it would be a cold and shady space given its aspect.**

- Cathedral Gardens - comments here have been gathered under **Key Move 5**

Key Move 2 – Buildings on/around the Square

Setting aside the specific comments from Heritage advisors (set out in the following **Heritage** section), views about the placement of buildings on the square focused on a few key issues,

- Building Placement/Form
 - The placement of buildings (including tall buildings around the Convention Centre) needs to avoid shading out additional areas of the public space.
 - That buildings too large or close to the cathedral would diminish the space needed to appreciate its scale and stature.
 - Use lighter/airy building types as opposed to dense heavy structures.
 - Use small buildings/larger scale trees as alternative forms of space enclosure
 - Use building designs that respect, complement and enhance the heritage of the Square
 - The long distance vista to the Cathedral along Worcester Boulevard should be safeguarded from intrusion by new buildings.
- Building uses
 - Important that the buildings are managed to encourage uses that appeal to a wide range of demographic and cultural interests.
 - Interesting places have a variety of shops, galleries and other small scale niche uses
 - **Providing housing on upper floors can bring life to the area and an opportunity that has been traditionally out of range to young people.**
 - A number of related points are included in a subsequent **commercialisation** section

Key Move 3 – Improving connectivity around the wider area

A substantial amount of feedback raised questions about the access intentions around Cathedral Square. The draft concept emphasises a strong north south movement axis which many misunderstood to be a new road link. Greater clarity about the access / shared space arrangement to serve the uses around the spaces – particularly hotel guests, service deliveries, taxis - and how through traffic would be redirected could have been provided drawing on the content of the Accessible City transport plan.

Important to get access arrangements well considered and fixed early with a clear rationale to avoid future councillor decisions undoing the intentions and undermining the experience of the place.

Various comments were made about the tram and a potential link along Colombo Street. This should be explored as well as extending the purpose of the tram from that of a tourist resource to a convenient inner city loop which could, in time, connect to a wider city light rail network.

Streets into Square could be designated as Shared Zone (10 km/h streets) with traffic resolutions permitting appropriate service access, etc. access. This would be consistent with treatment of, for example, Oxford Terrace, Mollett Street and Poplar Lane.

Comments also noted the following potential opportunities.

- Trialling the closure of Cathedral Square to through traffic, shifting movement onto Manchester/Durham St (once their upgrades are completed) could help to prepare drivers for the change.
- Moving the Chalice onto the Colombo St axis making it a clear visual landmark and a cue to drivers that it is not a through route
- Improving links to the transport infrastructure along Manchester Street – how is good foot traffic to the East Frame residential community going to be encouraged and directed?

Key Move 4 – Upgrading streets and lanes between hubs of activity.

As directed through aspects of the Central Christchurch Recovery Plan, An Accessible City and in private sector developments to date, this outcome is already being progressed. It might have been more valuable to highlight those laneway links that the Strategy intends to expect/encourage/require. Further comments were:

- Encourage the use of less hardy native species, such as ferns, within the narrow laneways and smaller spaces
- Use the networks of laneways to develop heritage resources that allow visitors to learn about the city's landmarks and pre-earthquake heritage.
- Captured in more detail in the **Commercialisation** section, concern was expressed that there may not be enough population to generate the activity and vibrancy to sustain too many laneways, at least in the short to medium term.

Key Move 5 – Integrating water and indigenous ecosystems into streets and spaces.

A range of positive comment was made in response to this part of the proposal with many natural, cultural and human/practical benefits highlighted ranging from natural treatment of stormwater, climatic management and making a change from the very 'hard' nature of the current square landscaping. Specific comments included:

- Water environments will need careful management and will carry running costs to maintain water quality and flow.
- Need to clarify whether the source is from the Avon or from groundwater springs as river water, after rainfall events, contains contaminants that indigenous planting would not tolerate.
- Explore opportunities to link together naturalised areas, including the River, as corridors for urban wildlife.
- Important that the introduction of native species is properly bedded in to create a sustainable habitat area – not just 'plantings'
- New plantings will require adequate growing space and good soil quality – trees should have loose pits with soil cells
- Include multiple water features e.g. jets for kids to run through, fountains, (interactive)
- Make convention plaza a fernery/secret forest/garden if it's sheltered (water feature, etc.)
- Large areas of grass in the Square will struggle to survive with people walking, sitting in it and so the cost of upkeep will be very expensive.
- Stormwater
 - o Treatment infrastructure around the square could be turned into an educational feature highlighting the extent and impact of the pollutants and how the new technology works.
 - o Depending upon the water source, there will need to be obvious caution around channel capacity and flow paths.

Heritage

The primary feedback on this matter is captured in a full statement prepared by the Heritage Team which will be provided to Regenerate Christchurch's project team. The following points summarise key matters:

- Cathedral Square (the space itself), the Anglican Cathedral, the Citizens War Memorial, the Old Government Building, Godley Statue and the Old Post Office building are all scheduled Highly Significant heritage items. Within and around them are a range of other important civic and heritage items (including boundary walls, the Four Ships plaques, the police kiosk and even the road layout).
- There was clear support from Heritage Advisors for:
 - o Removal of through routes for road traffic
 - o The Cathedral Gardens component, provided that the intended landscaping utilises a more formal character as the stony creek character implied appears too informal for this civic space.
 - o Retention of the strong north-south Colombo St visual connection and views to and from the Anglican Cathedral.

- Rationalising the different levels across the square to make it a more flexible/accessible space.
 - The lightweight covered area ('Living Room'), subject to the impact on views of the Old Post Office and Cathedral.
 - The proposed Library Plaza
- Heritage Advisors state that the proposal as it stands has "a permanently negative impact on the heritage values of the scheduled item(s)", and in the team's opinion could result in considerable loss of heritage significance. This arises from:
- alteration of the shape of the Square from a cruciform shape to an approximate 'L' shape through the introduction of buildings and the creation of smaller separate spaces,
 - the permanence, solidity and scale of the proposed buildings with consequential,
 - impact on views to and from the Cathedral – especially along Worcester Boulevard to the west wall, the Rose Window, and the steeple (if rebuilt) - the proposed layout and visual renderings imply a restricted tunnel view rather than the more expansive view shaft that currently exists.
 - permanent loss of formal public/civic open space which will:
 - crowd or impede the Cathedral in a way that diminishes appreciation of its scale / presence.
 - reduce the prominence of the Highly Significant Godley Statue (and associated green plot)
 - reduce the flexibility in the use of the space for large capacity events including ANZAC commemorations and New Year celebrations
 - complete removal of some lesser civic and heritage items including the Wigram Wall and Cathedral South Lawn.
- More understanding is sought around a proposal to re-orientate or move the Citizens War Memorial. Justification for this needs more careful consideration in response to relevant Maori and European cultural perspectives and the unusual design of the memorial itself.
- The following suggestions are made to mitigate some of the effects of the proposals as they are currently framed,
- If the introduction of buildings is pursued as a key component of the proposals,
 - more separation from the Cathedral, Godley Statue (and plot) and War Memorial, would reduce the detrimental impacts related to views, loss of space and crowding.
 - the use of lightweight, more transparent and visually permeable and non-permanent buildings could be supported which were designed to reflect the surroundings and incorporated sympathetic use of materials
 - An associated or alternative solution to the enclosure of the proposed spaces would be through the use of trees and shrubs in moveable planters which could be reconfigured to meet the needs of different types of events (including high capacity events) and avoid any permanent impact on the form of the Square itself.
 - Soft landscaping should be balanced with hard landscaping, so that soft landscaping does not become the dominant character of this formal civic space.
 - All the various compartments/areas proposed in the Square need to be visually linked up and able to be read as a whole, so the cruciform plan of the Square can still be experienced overall to its full extent, supporting its heritage values.
- The recent public engagement on the Future of Heritage has revealed a community desire for our understanding of heritage to include Māori history and stories. There may be opportunities to identify and enhance the Māori history of this area within the proposal.

Additional points, not already included above, raised by other staff included,

- If the Cathedral is not rebuilt / rebuilt in its current form its previous existence/extent could be recognised through outline paving, etc.

- It should be noted that Trees in Cathedral Square are protected within the District Plan meaning a resource Consent for their movement/removal is needed
- An observation has been made that the construction of the Cathedral disturbed a burial site and ancestors bones were dug up and 'thrown aside.' This needs to be explored further as the project continues, and if justified, a means to redress that act in some way could be incorporated.
- Important that impacts on the War Memorial and the use of space on remembrance dates is recognised.
- How is the new design celebrating our heritage, including colonial history and heritage?

Infrastructure

- Given the conceptual nature of the proposals at this stage, infrastructure teams were not in a position to comment on matters of detail but will willingly collaborate as the proposals are firmed up and more detailed understanding of infrastructure needs / realignments become apparent.
- Important to have supporting infrastructure – especially power, water and drainage – to ensure that spaces could be used to meet different events and other realistic future needs.
- Ensure that the capacity of trunk infrastructure running through and around the square was futureproofed to avoid relaying. Noted that it would cost millions to reroute Orion power lines.

Events

In relation to public events, points included,

- **A need to consider how current event arrangements might be transposed into the new public spaces to see whether they work and to identify opportunities to enhance event experiences.**
- Clear and early communication around the availability of spaces for events as reconfiguration of the spaces takes place (contingency planning)
- Removal of legal road status along the event space section of Worcester Boulevard would remove 'road closure' processes
- Dialogue to ensure that event spaces are well served by operator infrastructure – power, water, etc.
- **Clarification on how the event space capacity has been calculated and further soundings on whether a 10,000 person space is enough for the centre.**
 - o **Need to consider this as part of a wider understanding of the desire to use higher capacity event areas**
 - o **Recognise the role that peripheral areas can serve in meeting event organiser needs – flexible spaces can meet different needs.**
- Availability of suitable access (and surface load bearing) to accommodate wide/large/heavy event installations
- **Recognise that it is the frequency of small and medium sized events that will sustain activity around this area, not the one off festivals or major activities.**
- **Need to consider the acoustic design of spaces to avoid future conflicts with residents.**

Commercialisation

- Need to be careful of developing too many lanes without the population / stock of businesses to support them. If the energy/ vibrancy is stretched too much resulting in under-tenanted stretches, vacancy will snowball resulting in the creation of unsafe environments. These will precipitate vandalism, graffiti or opportunist crime with subsequent calls for additional security cameras, policing, etc.
- Buildings on the Square
 - o need to have small scale and affordable tenancies to attract the diversity of activity/interest
 - o need to be carefully selected to get the right mix and this may mean some trade off in rent levels – particularly in early years

- upper floor residential tenancies need to be offered on terms that reflect the active nature of the surrounding spaces and to groups, including key workers or students, who want to live life in the heart of the city.
- Realism about the market for long term leases
- Models and mechanisms to deliver new publicly operated social enterprise/commercial space
- The value of temporary buildings as a means to try new ideas rather than a long drawn out process to secure permanent buildings
- Interface of hospitality uses and event spaces – **Tenancies and associated leases of outdoor public space (for tables and chairs, etc.) around event spaces will need to be framed to reflect that events take priority.** How might this affect the viability of commercial leases?

Delivery Observations

Comments highlighted the potential costs of the changes to the spaces and other proposals, as well as the operational costs that would need to be borne over the long term. It would be valuable at the next stage to understand the split of costs across, say, infrastructure, buildings, individual spaces, etc.

If Council is going to commit to transformation it has to see it through. Picking and mixing components would not work. However, this does not imply a blank cheque. Next stages must offer more financial/timeframe context into the debate as there is a risk people are being promised something that would become unaffordable to deliver - a reputation risk that would likely be borne by Council, not Regenerate Christchurch.

Other comments highlighted measures that could support delivery and potentially mitigate some costs.

- Seek commercial sponsorship of spaces to cover running costs for particular components
- Careful planning and co-ordination of works to get work completed in stages whilst limiting impacts from adjacent developments (incl. long term Cathedral programme).
- Using different materials (e.g. crushed aggregate like Avon River pathways) in the event spaces and gardens to replace the existing pavers which could then be recycled for use on shared spaces and wider Colombo St /Worcester Boulevard approaches.
- Council's Enliven Places programme could be used to trial and test space design elements (e.g. youth spaces) and put temporary solutions in place while construction takes place.
- **An ambitious but valuable quick win to build public confidence would be the delivery of some elements of the Library Space to coincide with the building opening in 2018.**
- Important to consider and arrange tree and plant supply with as long a lead in as possible. The rebuild and development nationally has put pressure on supply of certain species and large specimens.
- From a practical perspective, there was recognition that the capital works to deliver the buildings and spaces needed to be accompanied by operational expenditure (including new operational ways of doing things like cleaning, maintenance and event programmes) and incidental needs (such as signage, information and public toilets).

Other Opportunities

A number of opportunities for further investigation were suggested.

- Increase the colour of the built form and space and reinvention the botanic content of the plantings to bring vivid colour and life all year round.
- Build public ownership of the spaces around the square
 - Encourage a culture of more spontaneous use of public spaces by simplified processes / rules.
 - Engage community interests in planting and public art (horizontal and vertical)
 - Use the Streets for People event to explore opportunities for community run events.
- Think about connections and uses of technology – what can be embedded now to improve our enjoyment, management and operation of these civic spaces.

- Public Art - develop public art at various scales that reflect our diverse cultures and communities, continue to find space for street art, innovative forms of art (e.g. Laser Art).
- Promotion – dedicate space to showcasing of our industries, products and innovations to visitors and local people
- Connect to the world – encourage investment in our spaces from overseas use (e.g. Spanish antipodean connection)
- Interactive seating for recreational activities e.g. games/music/speakers.
- Entertainment for different types of visitors in different spaces - e.g. cinema, playground

Sources of Further Information

A range of staff indicated keenness to feed in their knowledge and expertise as required during the remaining part of the project. The following list contains sources of reference that would be valuable to be aware of and to use in finalising proposals.

- Heritage team - listed heritage items and history of (consent requirements) development of the Square
- CCC construction standards - Infrastructure design standards, Storm water / tree pit design guides
- Enliven Places Programme – trial and test some ideas in plan.
- Transport research reports
- Property records (to explore legal standing of land parcels, reserves, legal road, etc.)