

Enhancement Plans for Central Square

Ideas for the enhancement of Central Square continue to develop following the successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid. The grant has enabled a firm of landscape consultants to be appointed to prepare a Project Development Plan, including designs for re-landscaping.

The Development Plan has involved widespread consultation with residents and visitors to find out what people think is right and wrong with the Square and what could be done to improve it. It is intended to produce the research and documentation to make up a second application to the Lottery Fund for a grant to implement the improvements on the ground.

Residents of all ages visited the exhibition during Proms Week



Many residents will have visited the exhibitions held in Central Square during Proms week and at the Henrietta Barnett School Fete. The exhibition artwork can still be viewed on the Trust website www.hgstrust.org. The purpose of the exhibition was to present a number of alternative approaches for the re-landscaping of the Square, ranging from an authentic restoration of the Lutyens planting to a more radical reinterpretation of the space. Visitors were asked to state their preference and suggest other ideas that could be included.

Many of you will have filled in questionnaires at the exhibitions to let the landscape designers know what you think. Over 200 were returned.

The results of these questionnaires have been analysed and the comments accommodated in the latest design.

Most respondents felt the Square is not well used, is poorly maintained and that the planting is dull. The space has become undervalued and is no longer seen as the symbolic heart of the Suburb. Introducing new features such as a children's play area were popular with some, to bring life to the area. Many felt the space should occasionally be used for events and celebrations as well as quiet recreation.

What to do with the trees was a major issue that divided respondents. The original surviving lime trees had been clipped into box shapes until the late 1950's to give a formal feel and retain the scale of the planting. This pruning stopped and the limes have since grown very large, obscuring views of the buildings and making parts of the space rather dark.

Some respondents felt that it would be a shame to remove the existing trees, preferring them to be retained and augmented with new trees to the original layout. Others felt that they needed to be replaced to restore something like Lutyens' original intention. This is, after all, a man-made landscape and all such landscapes need management in order to retain their original appearance.

Whether the existing trees are retained or replaced will partly depend on the advice of a hydrologist and an arboriculturalist. The trees may need to be removed to allow the excavations necessary to improve the drainage. Presently the Square is unusable for much of the year because of water-logged ground. The poor drainage has caused many of the original trees to