

Picardy Place – more talk and a further report

Everyone knows that the Picardy Place roundabout is a mess for all road users, whether you are a car driver or a cyclist. As a pedestrian it is difficult to find the best way to cross, as a cyclist it is often a nerve-wracking experience, and as a car driver it can be busy and frustrating at best.

But it is fairly clear that the way the council has dealt with putting a new design for the area in place has also been pretty messy, and they have only been stopped in their tracks by recent public outcry (mainly recorded in The Broughton Spurtle [here](#)).

If you don't know what the roundabout looked like (before Leith Street was closed) then let us remind you :

Coming up – what next for Picardy Place roundabout/gyratory/junction pic.twitter.com/gDcCUjgnBJ

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [October 6, 2017](#)

We spoke to Green councillor Claire Miller in late August when she had seen the plans for the Picardy Place roundabout but they had not at that point been made public. She explained that the proposals are for three lanes of traffic at the widest points and a loss of public realm. She said : “We have lovely wide pavements and greenery here and that's all going to go unfortunately. It is all part of the plan. We have healthy trees and they are all going to be cut down on both sides of the roundabout.

“When I saw the plans I was struck by how wide it will become. At the moment we have a fairly compact roundabout but it will become a three lane gyratory with an island in the middle. It

is taking that space away from the pavement and away from the areas in front of the Cathedral and in Picardy Place which are beneficial areas at the moment as they shield people from the traffic.

“The Paolozzi statues are to be moved to Hillside Crescent Gardens which I am sure will be a lovely location for them but there was no public consultation about the decision.”



Against a backdrop of the decision on Picardy Place having been made under delegated authority and effectively behind closed doors, there has now been at least one public meeting (22 September) when the plans were displayed.

Yesterday at the Transport and Environment Committee Councillor Chas Booth, Green Councillor and committed cyclist lodged a motion demanding more public engagement on the design and an officers' report for the next Transport committee meeting on 7 December 2017.

There will now be further public consultation on the design over the next two months, and a further report will be written for the December meeting outlining any amendments to the layout and any cost implications of those.

Additional engagement will be carried out with elected members, allowing scrutiny of the design plan and responses from the public to date.

Date	Activity
Week Commencing 2 October	Transport and Environment Committee to consider report on Picardy Place with recommendation of further consultation.

<p>Weeks Commencing 16 October and 23 October</p>	<p>Elected Member briefings on design and feedback on public engagement. Public Engagement on current design and feedback from previous engagement.</p>
<p>Week Commencing 13 November or 20 November</p>	<p>Public Engagement on proposals for the central island created by the design</p>

Alongside the period of engagement, contractors are scheduled to begin enabling works in October, including the removal of the Paolozzi sculptures and Sherlock Holmes statues in the area. However, this will not include any work on the construction of the new layout.

The problem arises from the involvement of the developer of the Edinburgh St James project in the road layout.

There are three parties involved in contracts (called the Growth Accelerator Model) to build the £1 billion mixed use scheme, and as part of that the developer undertook an obligation in 2016 to build a 'multi-modal transport interchange the junction of Leith Walk, Leith Street and York Place'. We were told earlier in the summer that the plans for redesigning the roundabout (which at that point were not publicly available) had been approved under delegated authority and without much in the way of democratic process.

The Edinburgh St James contracts are very valuable to the city in providing the new development at the top of Leith Walk, and the council is being extremely careful not to put any of the terms of the GAM at risk. The Edinburgh Reporter understands that fallout from any breach of the terms of the GAM could potentially add millions to the cost of the completing the tram to Newhaven.

Director of Place Paul Lawrence was careful to set the scene before councillors discussed the motion lodged by Councillor Booth and explained that any major changes to the design were

unlikely. He said : “Significant delay would mean significant cost, so there is scope for some redevelopment but not major redesign.

“I believe it is possible to get to an optimal design which stakeholders will support and which will hopefully not have a significant impact on the GAM which is legally binding.”

Mr Lawrence confirmed that informal dialogue has gone on with Scottish Futures Trust, but he would not be surprised if the Scottish Government said there was no more money for the scheme as the GAM includes a financial ceiling.

He said that there is a range of conflicting uses at Picardy Place, and they have spoken to many stakeholders across all road user groups. When questioned about the apparent departure of Sustrans from any discussions Mr Lawrence was quite clear that the Sustrans proposals just did not work. He said that what they have tried to produce is a design which keeps all modes of transport moving, and confirmed he is still confident that the council can get a scheme which works for everyone.

[In a written statement](#) on their position about Picardy Place Sustrans say “Designs developed with traffic modelling as primary driver rather than places for people will result in a poor public realm experience.” Mr Lawrence said he did not accept that position.

This is the 2009 plan for comparison



Councillor Macinnes said : “There is a very serious intent behind this consultation. We want to get this as right as we possibly can for all of the concerned parties.

“Please don’t be under any illusion that this is any kind of sop in any sense. This is a serious attempt to bring forward

proposals that will meet the needs of those people who are concerned, and which everybody will be as happy as possible with."

Councillor Booth opened his remarks by saying that the process could have been a lot more open and transparent and must be more consultation in future. He mentioned that the consultation event held in September felt very much that the council was simply telling people what the roundabout would look like rather than asking for their views.

Councillor Booth conceded that he did not want to put the public investment at risk by risking any breach of GAM but he continued : "I do think we need to probe this a bit harder. Is there a way that we can take public concerns about the design of this junction on board in a way that doesn't threaten the agreements that we've got?"

Agreement was reached on the motion by Councillor Booth including:

that further consultation events will include consultation with Edinburgh Access Panel and other organisations who represent the disabled and elderly,

that the proposals with scale drawings will be available to see online

that if necessary the council will ask the Scottish Government and the developer about any revisals to the junction layout so that traffic is reduced, active travel infrastructure developed and public realm improved

that there is a consultation event with residents in streets nearby

that details of current capacity of the roundabout is provides with the proposed capacity at any consultation events

that consideration is given to revising a proposal to ban left turns from York Place into Broughton Street

With regard to reducing traffic it seems that this may run counter to the decision to increase car parking capacity at the Edinburgh St James development as recorded here by cycling lobbyists Spokes who reminded everyone that there would be four times as many parking spaces :

St James car space increase 550->1800 approved in 2009! More info-><https://t.co/NS3FN8cR6l> Probably was big factor in gyratory GAM decision <pic.twitter.com/ndILrZ9myq>

– Spokes CycleCampaign (@SpokesLothian) [October 5, 2017](#)

Councillor Susan Rae asked about work to move the Paolozzi sculptures to Hillside Crescent Gardens. She said it would be preferable to move them rather than put them into storage, but questioned the way this had been decided. She said :”This Massive decision was made without any consultation with councillors.” The council officer replied that there are now talks with the original benefactor Sir Tom Farmer and St Mary’s Cathedral about putting the sculptures back in place once the roundabout is complete.

Director of Place Paul Lawrence is to attend the New Town and Broughton Community Council on Monday 9 October 2017 in the first of the public engagement exercises designed to get the views of members of the public and other organisations with an interest.

