

**CABINET 19 FEBRUARY 2024**

Armada Way Cabinet Briefing Report



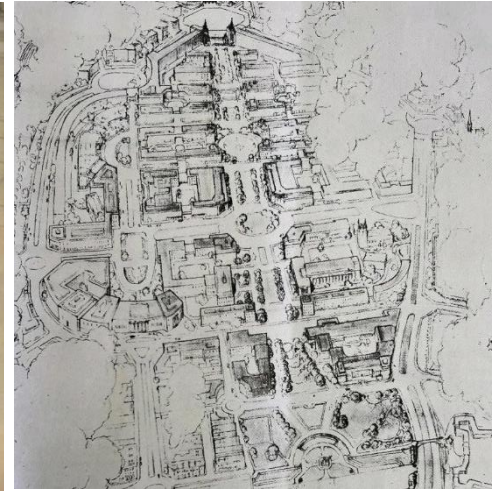
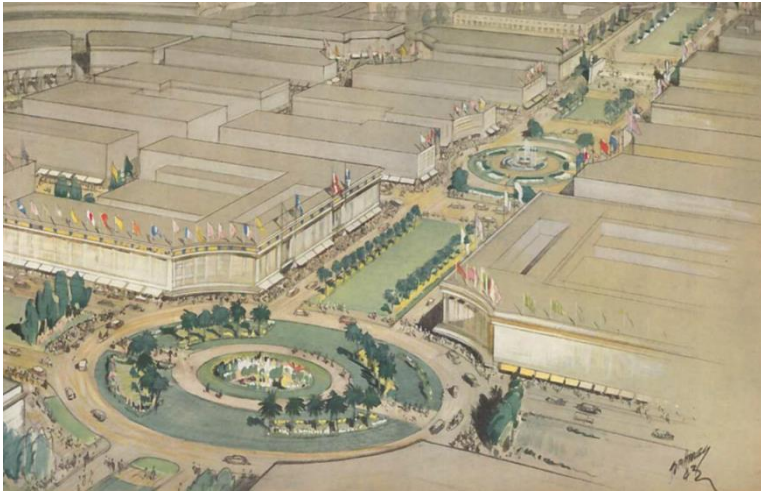
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## I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report seeks to bring together the information on the new Armada Way scheme, following the extensive 6-week consultation exercise undertaken by ECF for consideration in autumn 2023. The report seeks to outline the key information about the scheme, and how feedback from the consultation exercise has been considered and integrated into the final design so that a decision can be taken forward with the scheme. The Armada Way project is the largest of the Better Places public realm improvement schemes in the city centre and forms an important element of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) programme of works, which is funded in the main by the TCF grant from government matched by Local Authority contribution.
- 1.2. The report outlines the background to the scheme, chronology of events to date and history of decisions taken over various administrations which had green-lighted the progression of the scheme. This report will outline the decisions taken by the Leader of the Council following the election, which has resulted in a new design for Armada Way and the withdrawing of the previous decision and earlier design.
- 1.3. As is necessary for this scheme, due consideration has been given to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), and the Equalities Impact Assessment has been appended to the Cabinet Decision at Appendix B.
- 1.4. The new scheme for Armada Way project is one of, if not *the* largest single public realm scheme currently being undertaken in the country. It seeks to restore the grand gateway to the city centre, strengthening the connection between the railway station with the Hoe with the continuous historical vista. The new scheme, which Cabinet is asked to approve, has the following, key elements (see, also, the Final Scheme Design at Appendix L):
  1. A total of 202 trees along Armada Way, 50 more than previously existed – ranging from between 3.5 and 8 metres tall when planted. This includes the retention of all 39 of the current Armada Way trees save for 4 of them which will be translocated (i.e. moved) to the arboretum area of The Park, Plympton.
  2. Providing biodiversity enhancements through these extensive new trees, together with underplanting, wildflower areas, reedbeds, and bee and insect hotels. The educational experiences will include tree species plaques along the corridor.
  3. A ‘destination’ play village the size of five tennis courts, providing a range of spaces for children and young people to run, splash, balance, swing, climb and relax. This will include extensive areas of dancing jets to activate the space throughout the day and night.
  4. An extensive new surface water drainage system (SuDS) to manage water smartly, powered by solar panels to make it sustainable. The SuDS will utilise rain gardens, reedbeds and attenuation tanks to store water before circulating to irrigate the new trees.
  5. The provision of new lighting columns between 12m and 15m tall, with feature lighting, projections. These are to improve safety and security, enhancing the evening experience.
  6. A greatly improved CCTV system with clear, uninterrupted views across Armada Way. This is intended to help to deter anti-social behaviour.
  7. Significant new areas of seating, with a range of different seating options for around 500 people to sit and enjoy the settings.
  8. An externally assessed LTN 1/20 compliant cycle path catering for cyclists of all abilities along with cycle racks and Beryl Bike hubs.
  9. Pop-up and multi-use spaces with water and power – a range of different accessible pop-up spaces will be available for retail, arts and entertainment.

## 2. HISTORY OF ARMADA WAY



*“We have permitted ourselves the one monumental feature of the whole of Plymouth rebuilding – a great view seen from the forecourt entrance, across the shopping and civic centre to the Naval War Memorial on the Hoe”. “the vista will be the visitors guide”.*

*(A Plan For Plymouth, Abercrombie & Watson 1943 page 67)*

- 2.1. ‘A Plan for Plymouth’ was developed in 1943 by the esteemed town planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie and the city engineer James Paton-Watson. This plan outlined how the war-torn city centre area would be rebuilt on a grid network based on latest planning thought of the era by dividing the city centre into zones, including retail, office, civic and cultural offerings. A critical element of this plan, tying all of these new areas together and connecting the Hoe with the Station was Armada Way. Armada Way, at around 40-60 metres in width, was intended as a broad ceremonial and direct boulevard, inspiring a spirit of rebirth in the post-war period and confidence for the future of the city.
- 2.2. As a result of the prevailing topography of the land between the Station and the Hoe, the city centre area effectively laid within a basin with high points at both ends. The objective for Armada Way was to make best use of these natural conditions, with the overriding ambition of the plan being to achieve a grand vista toward the Naval War Memorial which was previously not visible in pre-war Plymouth. This built upon an earlier idea for connecting St Andrew’s Cross diagonally to the Hoe, albeit this new plan, which was possible due to the damage sustained on the city centre, was larger and grander in scale. The idea was that visitors to the city arriving by rail at what was then North Road station, would have a clear route into the city centre along this key axis, with the view to the Hoe and Royal Naval memorial, central to Abercrombie’s vision, being a clear and constantly visible landmark.



2.3. Due to the scale of the Armada Way as a result of post-war planning, the boulevard itself was developed in a piecemeal fashion, extended as and when pre-war buildings were demolished and sites cleared. The original 1950s Braille Garden at the northern end is one of the only remaining parts of the original plan, which has seen trafficked streets replaced by pedestrianisation in the 1980s and various landscaping interventions.

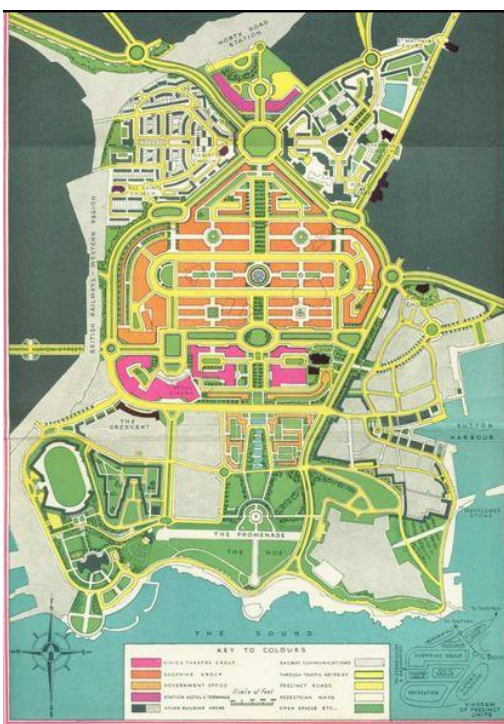
2.4. The importance of Armada Way as the backbone of the original Beaux-Art style plan from which the rest of the city centre hangs cannot be

overstated. Armada Way was to be a kilometre long processional, tree lined route for the people of Plymouth, running directly through the commercial centre, bisected by the smaller streets of the grid, whilst maintaining superiority and prominence over them. A report commissioned by Plymouth City Council in 2014 (*Heritage Audit & Statement of Significance for Plymouth City Centre*) recognised the significance of Armada Way in this regard, stating that the boulevard is “*probably the best realised element (of the plan), making it a heritage asset of **high significance***”. This was a point reaffirmed in the 2019 City Centre Conservation Area Conservation Appraisal & Management Plan (outlined in detail later in this report) which set out a series of ambitions for enhancing this space.

### 3. THE CASE FOR CHANGE AND A NEW SCHEME

- 3.1. Armada Way is a project of strategic importance for the city centre and has long been identified as a priority scheme which will enable the long-term regeneration of the city centre. It is recognised that the redevelopment of the corridor will help to ensure economic growth in the city centre, whilst enabling the transition from an entirely retail led district to a prosperous mixed-use area. It was also identified as being an important project in securing the overarching environmental ambitions of the City Council for its centre, through the provision of extensive new, appropriate greening and large-scale sustainable drainage infrastructure.
- 3.2. From 6pm on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023, the Council sought to undertake the felling of 126 trees as part of the implementation of a scheme formally approved that day by the Leader of the Council, Richard Bingley. These enabling works were halted in the early hours of 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 following the service of an interim High Court injunction. Of the 129 trees originally proposed to be felled in order for that scheme to be implemented (including 3 trees which had shown evidence of bird nesting and would not have been felled on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in any event), a total of 20 trees remained which were subject to the interim injunction.
- 3.3. Following the May 2023 elections, there was a change of administration from Conservative to Labour under Council Leader Cllr Tudor Evans OBE. The first decision taken by the Leader within hours of taking control of the Council was to withdraw the decision of the previous administration. The withdrawal meant that the previous decision was now academic, and the scheme as had been approved on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (which required the felling of the further 20 trees) would *not* be implemented. A potential new scheme, the subject of this Cabinet Decision, has since been developed following extensive discussion between Officers, Councillors and the design team. This new scheme has utilised a number of the features of the previous scheme but, critically, does not entail the felling of any of the remaining trees within Armada Way (noting that one of the 20 that would have been felled under the previous scheme has since died). An extensive independent consultation was held on this new scheme for a period of 6-weeks between 17<sup>th</sup> October and 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023 which scheme has since now been amended where appropriate, in response to the views received during that consultation. Detail of the engagement process and design amendments made following the consultation, are outlined in detail later within this report at Sections 8, 9 and 10.

#### Our changing City Centre



3.4. Following the Plymouth blitz during the second world war, the city centre area was left devastated through extensive bombing campaigns. As outlined in (2) above, the city centre was rebuilt in accordance with the Beaux-Arts grid which still exists today, forming the primary structure of the streets and spaces. The grid included wide streets and boulevards with significant areas of public realm and large separation distances between buildings to allow the feeling of lightness and space which would be a notable change to the pre-war city which was at the time considered congested.

3.5. The Abercrombie Plan largely redesigned Plymouth city centre first and foremost around the car, with wide streets and boulevards accompanied with a zonal approach to land uses. As outlined in 2.1, the zonal system split the city centre into distinct areas including civic, office, cultural, and most notably a very large footprint area for retail which was envisaged to be the direction of travel for this post-war era. The city centre

also was planned to be exceptionally large overall, roughly twice the size required for a city of its size and population, and in some cases significantly larger than other cities across the country with much larger populations. Another challenge of the Abercrombie Plan was the extensive areas given over to the public realm, again significantly more than comparable cities, which increased further with pedestrianisation in the 1980s.

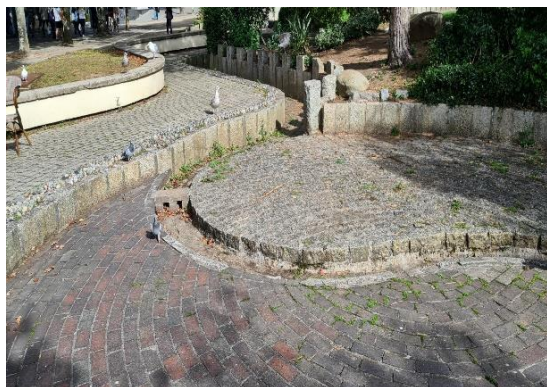


3.6. Plymouth's city centre, in common with most large town and cities across the country, needs to change to adapt to changing shopping habits, a gradual decline in bricks and mortar retail and a shift in the ways that we use our public realm spaces. There is a need for Plymouth city centre to adapt quickly to ensure that it remains relevant and fit for the future as a modern and attractive regional centre.

3.7. The overarching ambition of the Council is to bring a large amount of mixed use, residential-led development into the centre. Based around the existing structural urban form of the grid network, the Council hopes to encourage new life to a large number of the tired, vacant buildings and plots, with some extending upwards, encouraging more people to live and dwell in the city centre public spaces during both day and night. Demand for city centre living is expected to grow, but it is reliant upon major redevelopment of the public realm schemes to act as 'enabling infrastructure' to encourage development for city centre living in Plymouth. The previous environment on Armada Way did not encourage investment nor inspire confidence to developers. This is a position and view shared by our partners who recognise the potential of the city centre to address the opportunity for urban living, but which is currently at a low ebb with limited interest. Our ambition for Armada Way is to create a new urban linear park, offering the space for a wealth of activities and new uses which have never existed in the space before, ranging from play to performance to high quality outdoor food and beverage spaces, whilst also creating an essential attractive 'front garden' to help kickstart and promote new residential development along the boulevard.

- 3.8. The redevelopment of Armada Way to enable this change and the creation of new destination space as a way of securing and catalysing the future growth of the City Centre is supported by numerous partners and statutory bodies including Homes England, Historic England, the City Centre Company, Plymouth and Devon Chamber of Commerce, South West Business Council, Environment Agency, Sustrans and South West Water.

### A tired and inaccessible landscape

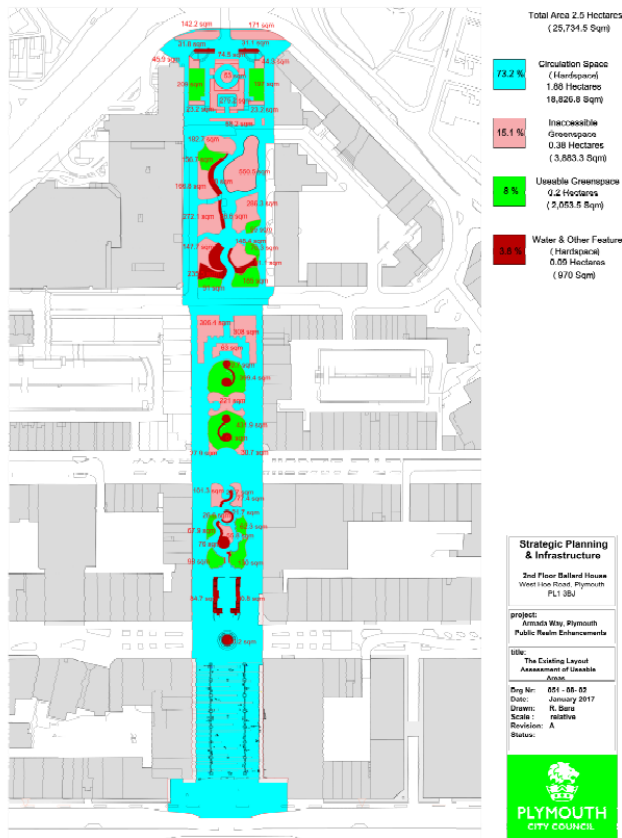


3.9. Armada Way was redesigned in the mid 1980's following pedestrianisation of the main shopping streets in the city centre. Very little has changed along Armada Way in the intervening period until now, with the exception of the Piazza area which replaced the earlier subway under Royal Parade and provided the city centre with a large, focal piece of public realm for larger events. The 1980's redesign moved directly away from the strongly rectilinear grid-based design envisaged by Abercrombie as the showpiece of the post-war city

centre and included the provision of a winding 'stream' set into a variety of hard landscaping materials and a series of curved landscapes across different levels with interjecting ad-hoc pathways. The shift away from the original planned layout was acknowledged in the 2014 City Centre Heritage Audit which stated that "The curved ornamental paving and artificial streams are

at odds with the rectilinear geometry of the space and feel out of character with Abercrombie’s strongly-planned Beaux-Arts axis”.

- 3.10. Public realm can become dated when considered against what is desired for a modern city centre and addressing the various requirements it is expected to manage. It is clear that over the period of the 35 years or so, the hard landscaping along Armada Way has gradually started to fail and become broken and damaged which in some instances has led to it becoming a hazard to the public in some high footfall areas.
- 3.11. The winding stream, which consisted of three separate large pumping systems circulating treated water, was switched off around 15 years ago due to the heavy cost of maintenance and difficulty in replacing the parts needed to keep it operating effectively and safely. It was also designed in a period when long-term future proofing and sustainability, along with ever tightening budgets, were not considered as paramount to public realm design.
- 3.12. These issues, when combined with the general sense of deterioration in the public realm hard landscape features, the dense areas of concealment and large swathes entirely unused by pedestrians, gave the impression of an unloved city centre space in decline. This is the opposite of the vibrant, exciting, busy and modern mixed use city centre which the Council is striving to achieve through its Better Places programme.



3.13. In terms of the usability and accessibility of the space as a whole, the 1980’s landscaping arrangement with channel bisecting the space had resulted in large areas of the public realm being unusable and inaccessible. The issue of accessibility is particularly relevant to persons with limited mobility due to the considerable level changes across the public realm. This issue is exacerbated by the uneven and broken surfaces with a lack of safe and level footways transversing Armada Way resulting in a potential equalities impact on those with protected characteristics. Creating accessible and safe to use spaces along Armada Way is supported by the Plymouth Area Disability Action Network (PADAN) and Sustrans, both of whom have been engaged in earlier and more recent design review processes to provide input from persons with various disabilities and accessibility impairments.

3.14. The plan above has been created to show the hard, soft and water/other features

on Armada Way. The plan illustrates the conclusions that on Armada Way a total of 73.2% of the space was pedestrian circulation hard space (not all of this being accessible). The remaining area is defined as 15.1% inaccessible green space, with 8% of space classified as usable green space. A further 3.8% is identified as water/other hard landscape.

- 3.15. The issue of having such a large proportion of the public realm being inaccessible and/or unusable is not considered acceptable given Armada Way’s importance as the city centre’s showpiece boulevard. A primary objective of the new Armada Way should be to provide a range of spaces accessible to all, which will require considerable re-grading of land whilst working with the prevailing topography constraints, to create level areas of dynamic and usable spaces enabling the city centre to be welcoming for all.



### Night-time economy

- 3.16. At present, the core city centre area is largely empty after retail closing hours, with limited evening venues and significantly reduced pedestrian footfall in an area which should be busy with life and activity into the night. It is well known that a successful city centre requires a high level of activation and footfall across the day and into the evening in order to thrive and grow, and this is something which other cities which suffer from the same issues have been seeking to address. A key differential however is that our city centre does not currently afford a substantial population on its immediate doorstep which limits the baseline footfall of residents and visitors to build upward from.
- 3.17. It is imperative that the Council invests in the creation of a modern and attractive public realm which encourages use of the space well into the evening by the whole spectrum of society. Through creating the generators and attractors for people to come and spend time in the city centre into the evening, there will subsequent positive knock-on effect of encouraging businesses to remain open later into the evening and potentially new evening uses to open up along Armada Way.
- 3.18. Facilitating redevelopment along Armada Way to include considerable numbers of new homes will also increase the volume of footfall in the space during hours of darkness through people coming and going to their homes, deliveries, and undertaking activities in the space during the evening. To enable this scale of redevelopment to take place however requires the city centre to become more attractive, with a vibrant and safe public realm. This in turn will create an environment which is welcoming, and one which people want to live in and be part of, as opposed to somewhere that visitors and residents may wish to avoid during the evening.

### Safety, including Women & Girls



3.19. The Council's ambition is for the city centre to become somewhere which is popular, vibrant and safe across the day and night. Currently, Armada Way fails to offer a safe and attractive environment into the evening, both physically in terms of the public realm, and the commercial offer at ground-floor. The majority of the space is dark, particularly in the central section which is primarily due to building mounted lighting which is situated some distance

from the majority of the public realm areas. This separation distance had unfortunately created a large number of areas of concealment with swathes of over-developed planting which blocked long views within the corridor. The spread of the building mounted lighting was further restricted by the canopies of the trees.

- 3.20. CCTV coverage along Armada Way prior to the tree removal was very patchy and inconsistent, with large areas under no surveillance. This issue was previously raised by Devon & Cornwall Police, as well as Plymouth Against Retail Crime (PARC) officers and the Council's own CCTV officers. It was also evident that this issue was further exacerbated in periods when the trees were in full leaf, where the expanses of canopy cover with severely restricted views along and across Armada Way resulted in difficulty identifying and following offenders.
- 3.21. The poor levels of lighting, combined with some considerable areas of concealment and restriction of visibility from both a formal and informal surveillance perspective are very real concerns, and there have unfortunately been instances of the most serious types of crimes occurring in the immediate area. It is particularly important that the issue of personal safety in our city centre is effectively managed given the Council's commitment not only to improving the safety of women and girls, but all residents and visitors to the city who were presented with a dark and unwelcoming entrance to the city centre from North Cross subway.
- 3.22. There were also considerable issues of antisocial behaviour, including street drinking and both hard and soft drug use which was primarily focused on the heavily concealed area north of Mayflower Street. Over 200 incidents of antisocial behaviour were recorded by PARC during a

ten-month period to October 2022. This is a matter which has been raised by businesses which fronted onto this space, particularly those within the Armada Centre and the Copthorne Hotel, and from the City Centre Company who have long been calling for improvements to this particular area due to the long-standing issues around concealment.

### **Encouraging safe, active and green travel**

- 3.23. A key objective of all the Better Places programme of public realm works is focusing on improving access to, and the usability of our city centre spaces by active modes of travel. Armada Way, as the primary north-south route directly through the city centre, needs to promote and encourage travelling by active and sustainable travel methods.
- 3.24. Presently there are no defined routes for cyclists along Armada Way, which has the impact of cyclists using all of the footway space available along both flanks. Given that this space is currently fairly constrained in parts along Armada Way, it creates further opportunity for conflict. There are also currently considerable issues relating to the speed of some cyclists along the boulevard, accompanied by erratic behaviour which becomes particularly pronounced and problematic in the areas of higher footfall.
- 3.25. Given the importance of the Armada Way boulevard as the only direct north-south route through the city centre, and role as a connector between the railway station and the waterfront along with all the associated amenities, this is an essential issue to address. It will become even more important when considerable volumes of new housing is developed along Armada Way which necessitates having a legible and safe cycle way which meets necessary standards of design. This will support the Council in encouraging low to zero car use in the residential developments in the city centre, and a higher take up of green travel in the city more broadly when people have the ability to safely and comfortably connect their homes, work and social places by more sustainable methods.
- 3.26. It is clear that with the issues currently being experienced relating to conflict between pedestrian and cyclists, that the cycle way needs to be intrinsically designed to weave through the fabric of the public realm from the very outset and not retrospectively added, reducing the overall coherence and legibility of the space. Through reducing the opportunity of conflict where possible, whilst still creating a space which works for all users, Armada Way will become a much more equal and usable space for everyone.
- 3.27. It will also be essential to ensure that there are sufficiently wide paths provided for safe use by pedestrians. The current footway arrangements along Armada Way are disjointed, with the issues of mis-matched materials, level changes and broken slabs already outlined. The space also does not operate as effectively as it should in allowing for safe crossing of the space east-west with the exception of where highway routes intersect the space at Mayflower Street, New George Street and Cornwall Street. Through the creation of wide, open and hazard free footways constructed with high quality and robust materials which are consistent, thereby allowing for easy replacement and repair, we can ensure that the pedestrian environment is as safe as possible.

### **Long term environmental resilience**

- 3.28. Prior to March 2023, Armada Way had an overdeveloped planting landscape as a result of the original 1980's planting regime following the closure of Armada Way to vehicular traffic and subsequent pedestrianisation. As with advancements in public realm and landscape design theory and practice, our knowledge of trees has developed considerably since these trees were originally planted, and as a result we would not plant many of the types of trees, in the locations with the prevailing above and underground conditions, which were planted in that period. It is therefore imperative that new tree planting along Armada Way avoids the issues relating to the trees which were caused by the previous planting arrangement.
- 3.29. A key driver of the Armada Way scheme therefore is to ensure that all new tree planting accords with the principles of 'right tree, right place'. This will allow for the new trees to thrive in what is

quite a harsh, man-made environment, and for them to provide long-term resilience to changing climatic and environmental conditions. Our ambition is to ensure that greening of the city centre environment will be robust and last for the next century alongside considerable biodiversity gains through the creation of new habitats which have not previously existed in Armada Way.

- 3.30. Careful thought will be given to the future health of new trees to ensure resilience. This will include aspects such as preparation of the ground to avoid compaction, which is an issue which can seriously detriment a tree's health, promoting access to nutrients and water, and through the correct provision of underground planting cell systems which will allow for the trees' roots to grow healthy root systems which are not constrained by underground services, structures or post-war rubble.
- 3.31. It is also essential that the issue of drainage is appropriately dealt with through this major intervention which offers a unique opportunity to provide a large scale sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS). The city centre currently is a critical drainage area, with the water hitting Armada Way's hard surfaces running off into the combined sewer system, which is at capacity. In peak flow and storm events, the volume of water consequently overwhelms the post-war sewer system leading to discharge events into Plymouth Sound. Water must be dealt with smartly in the new Armada Way, with methods of capturing, storing and reusing water used to maximum effect, taking the strain off our sewerage network and promoting environmental enhancements locally and more widely including improved water quality in Plymouth Sound.

### Enhancing Armada Way's heritage, identity and purpose



3.32. An ambition of the redesign for Armada Way is to restore the original purpose of the grand boulevard, restoring the vista and the original line of sight line between North Cross and the Hoe. The grand vista was outlined in the original 'Plan for Plymouth' by Sir Patrick Abercrombie, with the principle of the view being a critical factor in the composition of the Beaux-Arts grid. It is this grid network of streets and spaces, lined by some special buildings, which defines Plymouth city centre as being of international importance and significance, alongside other comparable European cities such as La Havre. As is clear from the Plan for Plymouth, the entire purpose of the 40m wide boulevard was to connect the Hoe with the station, with the Naval Memorial being a consistently visible way-marker as you navigate your way from the station to the waterfront. The ambition of this unique piece of town-planning is something which the Council has sought to realise through the reimagining and restoration of Armada Way.

3.33. In 2014, an Asset Heritage Audit of Plymouth City Centre was commissioned. The audit reviewed the importance of various aspects of the city centre, reviewing the impact of more recent interventions against the historical importance of the city centre and its ambitions. Relating specifically to the vista, the report outlined that a "*Traditional Beaux-Arts Street planning uses formal planting in order to create vistas and promote certain views and this is certainly what was intended by Abercrombie. Such a layout creates a clear sense of legibility but allows public use of the space for movement, recreation, street markets etc. This has been diminished in Plymouth through the implementation of more ornamental planting in the early 1980s. A return to the formal, rectilinear planting of Abercrombie's Beaux-Arts scheme would benefit the legibility of Abercrombie's grid as well as the setting of the buildings which inhabit it.*" It is also stated that the "*the planting on Armada Way – North is too developed for the space. Notably, this diminishes the vista along Armada Way towards the Hoe.*" The report also refers to the more recent planting along the centre of Armada Way, stating that it "*closes off the green, open space he [Abercrombie] envisaged*" and the

*“curved paving, artificial streams, and heavy planting themselves do not reconcile well with the open spaces and geometric forms expressed in the 1943 plan. Notably, the planting, although pleasant, blocks much of the intended view down towards the Hoe.”* It is also stated that *“the vista along Armada Way is of high significance but it could be improved at its northern end”* (north of the sundial).

- 3.34. In considering of the original design intent and delivery of Armada Way as a piece of design and architecture, is clear that the importance of opening up this clear vista is of enormous significance to Plymouth and its identity, which itself has been reinforced through the City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (outlined in Policy and Guidance, below). A new plan for Armada Way offers a once in a generation opportunity to restore the grand boulevard to its original ambitious intent, releasing the vista which was always planned to the wide, open and guiding principle behind the entire city centre post-war design.

### Maintaining a high-quality space



3.35. The current layout and associated difficulties with maintaining the public realm in Armada Way is a significant liability for the Council. On-going issues of maintenance have resulted in the obvious degradation of both the hard and soft landscaping along the corridor, resulting in claims for trips in the region of £410,000 over the past 10 years, many of these being on Armada Way.

3.36. It is obvious when walking along Armada Way that the hard landscaping aspects of the public realm are disjointed, formed of many different materials, some of which being inappropriate for the space and its use. The hard landscaping is also

arranged over multiple levels, some with more significant height differentials, and others where it is more incremental. The various and aging materials along with issues of level changes, failing sub-base construction and broken slabs, makes it difficult to maintain effectively at reasonable cost and in a manner that is safe for those maintaining it. Issues with the maintenance include, for example having to lift mowing equipment manually, which is against the Council's safe working policy, to mow ad-hoc strips of grass amongst cobbles and rocks every few weeks.

- 3.37. Prior to the felling of the trees, it was evident that a large number of the existing trees had grown out of their constrained underground planting area as a result of being constrained within voids set within post-war rubble and the various slabs laid beneath the surface. This presented an on-going hazard in the high footfall pedestrian environment not only to pedestrians but in some instances the surrounding structural form. The landscape was also showing its age, with the required maintenance regime to keep an ageing landscape looking tidy and safe being resource intensive for minimal return, which was not deemed sustainable in the long term.
- 3.38. In common with other areas of the city centre, Armada Way has an extensive network of both live, dead and undefined utilities, some of which being located beneath concrete slabs up to one metre thick, which are unrecorded or of unclear ownership. This makes undertaking works to dig up, repair and replace, or add significant new infrastructure underground a considerable and complicated process. It has also been discovered through CCTV investigation and ground surveys that there are numerous locations where the existing post-war combined sewer system has failed, either through collapse or a break in the pipes. In locations such as this, it is unclear where the flow is terminating and likely it is infiltrating into the ground.
- 3.39. As large sections of Armada Way will be dug up to enable better ground conditions and facilitate redevelopment, it is imperative that that these issues are dealt with to effectively futureproof the city centre. Along with allowing for future district heating system runs and working with network utility providers, we can achieve a sustainable, resilient and adaptable environment in the long-term.

#### 4. POLICY & GUIDANCE RELATING TO ARMADA WAY

- 4.1. The new Armada Way design has been directly influenced through a number of strategic and local policies over a number of decades. Policy and guidance relating specifically to the redevelopment of Armada Way date as far back at the 2003 MacKay Vision for Plymouth. The proposed redesign and a new look for Armada Way is again further referenced in more recent documents including the City Centre Strategic Masterplan. The new design responds directly to and is compliant with the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP) Strategic Objectives and Policies. It accords with the principles for enhancing the historic environment, and specifically Armada Way, as defined within the City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP). In addition to these policies, a number of JLP site allocations are located along Armada Way, which were allocated based on the principle of a greatly enhanced public realm which will catalyse mixed-use growth along the corridor.

##### MacKay Vision for Plymouth (2003)

- 4.2. A 'Vision for Plymouth' was launched in November 2003 and sets out a clear vision for the city, showing exactly how it is going to become a reality. The vision focuses on the city centre as one of the key areas for large scale intervention proposing that a greater intensification and density of mixed use development be introduced to include new residential, leisure and cultural evening uses. Improvements to the quality of the built environment and the public realm with improved links to the waterfront:



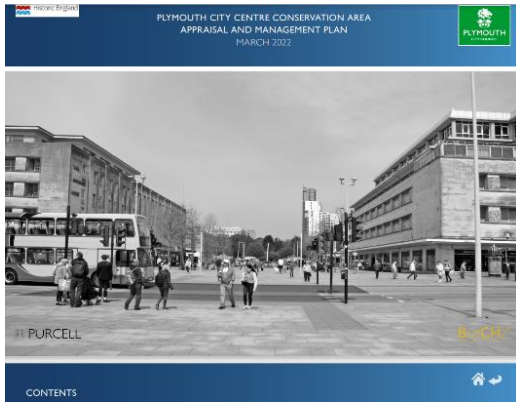
- Taller buildings
- Shared attractive spaces
- Quality landmark buildings
- Improved public transport interchanges

4.3. The Vision sets out that “the original purpose of Armada Way – a grand vista linking the train station to the Hoe – is recovered through a simplified landscape design, with movement enhanced by the introduction of a public transport link” and that “as a structuring element of the city, Armada Way is responsible for the connection and movement from the station to the waterfront, and indeed beyond the station to the north into Central Park.”

4.4. MacKay also states that “We feel it is important to retain the route as predominantly pedestrian, and propose that a new cohesive landscape strategy is developed, with an emphasis on clarity and flow, as opposed to the current obstructions. Regular lines of trees should be introduced to mark the formality and scale of the axis, with the ability to provide other items of street furniture as required to define and animate individual areas. We propose that the central area is kept clear of all obstructions, to allow for events, processions, markets etc., and advocate the preservation of a 6m lane on the eastern side for a future transport system. Where more carefully considered existing landscaping is found, such as between Royal Parade and Notte Street, this must be essentially retained within any new proposals.”

- 4.5. The MacKay Vision for Plymouth informed the subsequent Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan. It is within this context the proposals for Armada Way have been developed.

## City Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) (2022)



4.6. A large part of Plymouth city centre's post-war plan was adopted as a Conservation Area in 2019, and represents the UK's first post-war city centre conservation area. Councils are required to "formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement" of conservation areas within their jurisdiction, in the case of Plymouth this is the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP).

4.7. Prepared in accordance with best practice and Historic England guidance, the CAAMP defines and

records the special interest of conservation areas, analyses the characteristics that make it special, as well as setting out a plan for managing change to ensure its on-going protection and enhancement. This includes Armada Way. The CAAMP also aligns with local planning policy namely the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014-2034 and its accompanying Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2020.

- 4.8. The CAAMP makes reference to the importance of Armada Way in numerous areas, emphasising the original design to take "advantage of the *topography to gain long views through the redeveloped city centre to the Naval Memorial and Smeaton's Tower on the Hoe*" and being "*perhaps the most important public street in the city centre*" (para. 5.1 and 5.4).
- 4.9. At page 43, the CAAMP considers not only the original purpose of Armada Way but also identifies how this is prejudiced by the existing planting: "*Armada Way forms the backbone of the Conservation Area and was, from its earliest conception, designed to hold the Plan for Plymouth together, providing a broad boulevard from the mainline railway station to the Hoe. Its conception therefore was as a thoroughfare that both literally and figuratively tied the city together and to the rest of the country. It was originally an open vista, sloping down from its highest point at North Cross, down to the Civic Square, where it begins to rise again up to the Hoe. Views along Armada Way both from within the Conservation Area and its setting, therefore make a significant contribution to its special interest, however these have begun to be compromised by the original planting schemes reaching maturity and subsequent additional tree planting.*"
- 4.10. It then continues to state that "*Following its pedestrianisation in the 1980s, curved raised beds lined in composite stone and decorative planting characterised the boulevard north of the Conservation Area. Trees both in the central planted area and the pedestrian avenues on either side have matured and now unfortunately screen the best views down to the Civic Centre, the Guildhall tower from the upper stretches of Armada Way, although there is more visibility in the winter months.*"
- 4.11. The issue of the impact of the planting is again raised within Theme 1: Streets and Spaces, where it outlined that "*the shrubs in the Civic Square have grown considerably since they were planted more than half a century ago and these now frequently obscure important views north and south from the square. This is similarly the case towards the north end of Armada Way (outside the Conservation Area boundary) where trees screen views down Armada Way into the Conservation Area and beyond*"
- 4.12. The CAAMP includes recommended improvements, stating that there should be consideration of opportunities to "*restore the long vistas both within and across the Conservation Area, for example down Armada Way*" and the "*to ensure that this characteristic of the historic environment is maintained and enhanced, there is a need for sensitive management and design of the natural landscaping along Armada Way.*"
- 4.13. In developing the proposals for the redevelopment proper regard was given to this by officers.

## Plymouth and SW Devon Joint Local Plan (2013-2034)



4.14. The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (“JLP”) was adopted in 2019. Of particular significance to Armada Way are Strategic Objective SO3, Policy PLY6 and Policy PLY37, all of which are set out in Appendix E of this report, with the elements relevant to Armada Way italicised.

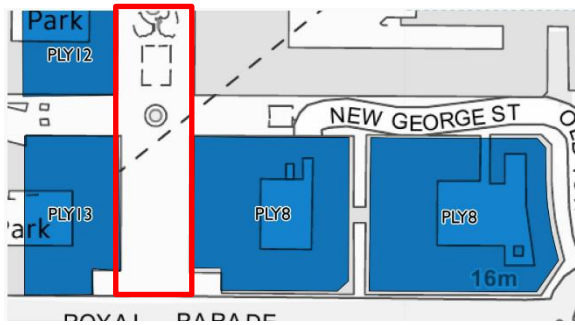
4.15. The relevant sections of the Joint Local Plan have been considered and informed the proposed for the redevelopment and design, for example:

- **SO3(3)** refers to realising the potential of the City Centre and Waterfront Growth Area as a regionally significant growth hub through *“improving sustainable transport facilities and connections throughout the area, and particularly between the City Centre and the waterfront at Millbay, The Hoe and Sutton Harbour”*. This is contributed towards with the proposed improvement of cycle paths which are embedded within the design of the area.
- **PLY6** refers to development that *“Respects and celebrates the centre’s mid-twentieth century built heritage, including the Beaux Arts grid of the 1943 Abercrombie Plan and the highest and good quality non-designated assets identified in the City Centre Masterplan”*. As set out above this has been a key aspect of the design, seeking to reinstate the intended prominence of Armada Way through introduction of the vista and seeking to maximise the potential of the key city centre open space.
- **PLY37** identifies key strategic infrastructure measures for the City Centre and Waterfront Growth Area. The key measures include: *“City Centre public realm and transport improvements to improve circulation and encourage investment, including [...]Armada Way public realm; incorporating City Centre Strategic Cycle Network and walking improvements”*. In the development of the scheme, with improved cycle path and pedestrian routes, including seeking to open up the area in terms of its overall accessibility, this has been a key aim of the design.

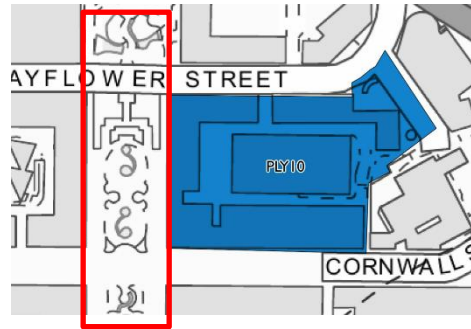
### Site Allocations

- 4.16. The JLP allocates a significant number of sites along Armada Way for redevelopment within the plan period. The aim of the allocations is to facilitate mixed-use regeneration along the corridor whilst protecting and enhancing the historic fabric and design ethos which was originally intended for Armada Way. The JLP allows for several hundred residential units along Armada Way, with buildings (either through reconstruction or extensions) of up to 8 storeys in height fronting directly onto it, with 6 storeys proposed for side streets.
- 4.17. Some allocations make specific reference to the *“New enhanced and redesigned public realm on and around the site, including at Armada Way in accordance with established City Centre public realm design principles and materials pallets”*.
- 4.18. The allocated sites, namely PLY8, PLY9, PLY10, PLY12 and PLY13 constitute a significant amount of frontage onto Armada Way. The plan allocations are included as extracts below with the extents of Armada Way itself defined by the red boundary line. Site PLY9 is subject to an approved planning application which is awaiting implementation for demolition of the former Mayflower House building to be replaced with an 18-storey student accommodation block of 490 bedrooms, 2,381 sqm of office accommodation and 793 sqm retail provision fronting directly onto Armada Way.

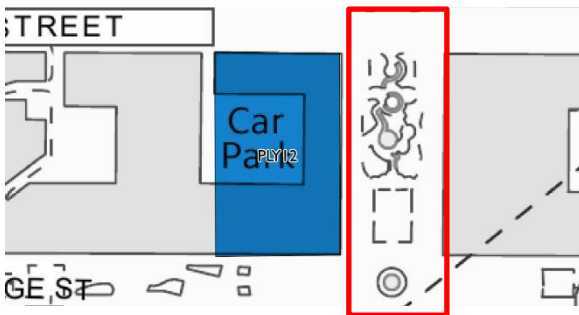
**PLY8, PLY13**



**PLY10**



**PLY12**

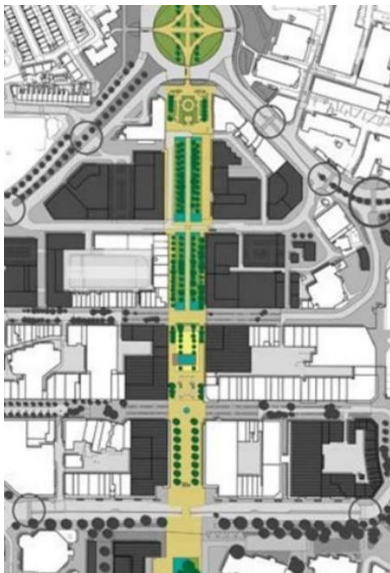


**PLY9**



**Plymouth City Centre Strategic Masterplan (2017)**

4.19. The City Centre Strategic Masterplan describes Armada Way as the stunning centrepiece of the



City Centre Grid, which deserves recognition as one of the greatest civic spaces of any city in Europe and indeed has a vista of scale and ambition capable of standing on an international stage. A single, simple overarching public realm plan for the route was deemed essential. It defines Armada Way’s identity as a "singular and spectacular processional route" which has been gradually eroded over 70 years by piecemeal changes which have "domesticated the scale of the route and introduced elements which interfere with long range views".

4.20. The masterplan states that Armada Way should be planned as the pre-eminent route in the City Centre and be read as a single continuous linear urban park connecting multiple neighbourhoods across the City Centre from the train station to the waterfront. The aim is to develop an overarching plan and design principles which can be implemented over time to open up views and provide the opportunity to walk and cycle down the centre of Armada Way to allow an appreciation of the scale of the route and help realise its potential.

4.21. The key objectives of the design for Armada Way are to:

- Recapture scale and grandeur of the route by opening up views, allowing movement through the centre of the space allowing the route to be appreciated as one single linear space.



- Give the route primacy over other City Centre streets by introducing greater continuity in design language and giving the sense that Armada Way is continuous and other routes are crossing it.
- Ensure that the continuity of the route extends from the Train Station to The Hoe with improved crossings, improved visibility and more consistency in materials.
- Allow local variations in character to reflect different parts of the City Centre.
- Seek to ensure that tree planting and replacement is primarily contained within avenues, using species which maintain a compact form to allow visibility along the length of the route with the exception of the listed gardens in front of the Civic Centre, using strong avenue tree planting to emphasise the scale and linearity of the space.
- Incorporate opportunities for sustainable urban drainage.
- Rationalise planting and materials to achieve a simple, elegant design which permits manageable ongoing maintenance.
- Use Armada Way to increase the presence of the Waterfront in the City Centre, not just through improved connections but through introduction of bold water features, installations and public art which reference the Waterfront.
- Incorporate clearly defined provision for cyclists along the centre of the route to take advantage of funding secured to deliver walking and cycling improvements in the city centre.
- Introduce a soft public space such as lawn to the north of the public toilets to allow a greater range of activities including play to take place within the City Centre.

## 5. TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE FINAL ARMADA WAY SCHEME

### Planning Advice

- 5.1. Pre-application advice was sought from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on the now withdrawn scheme. A response (22/01549/MOR Armada Way Public Realm Enhancement Works) was received from the Local Planning Authority on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2022.
- 5.2. The response set out the LPAs informal advice stating that:
  - There were no listed buildings within the development site (red line plan submitted).
  - The demolition works did not constitute a 'relevant demolition', therefore not triggering the need for planning consent.
  - The construction work was capable of being undertaken using permitted development rights on the understanding that the works are located entirely on Highway Maintainable at Public Expense.
  - That none of the trees within the boundary of the site (shown on the red plan submitted) were subject to a TPO, though works to any trees in the Conservation Area (south of the sundial) would require a section 211 notice to be served on the LPA 6 weeks in advance of relevant works (including pruning).
  - That, considering the provisions of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2000 and the information provided the proposed development did not fall within Schedule 2 and fell outside of the requirements of the Act.

### Highway Maintainable at Public Expense (HMPE)

- 5.3. The entirety of Armada Way is under the ownership of Plymouth City Council, including the central grassed areas, and any work undertaken on Armada Way since its formation in the 1950's would have been undertaken by the relevant local highway authority.
- 5.4. Armada Way is designated largely as highways maintainable at public expense (HMPE) with the central grassed areas classified as Corporate Property. The areas of HMPE extend to the footways and pedestrianised areas which run along the eastern and western flanks of the corridor. There are in addition to this, other paths which are un-adopted highway. The central grassed areas are not classified as Highways Maintainable at Public Expense (HMPE) and are instead Corporate Property maintained and managed by the Council.

### Tree Surveys

#### 2017

- 5.5. As part of the initial investigation work for the Better Places programme, a tree survey of the entire city centre area was completed by WSP in 2017. This survey was then used to inform the baseline information relating to the development of the individual projects. The 2017 report concluded that all trees in the Armada Way corridor (from North Cross to Royal Parade) were Category C (trees of low quality) with only a single tree identified as Category B (trees of moderate quality).

#### 2021

- 5.6. A further tree survey report was undertaken by YGS in November 2021 which updated the findings of the 2017 survey. The Council required that the survey went above the requirements as set out in BS5837: Trees in relation to design, construction and demolition to provide additional information on the condition, impacts of, and future proposed longevity of the existing trees in Armada Way. The now withdrawn scheme was undertaken on the basis of the findings of this report, and the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (below).

- 5.7. The YGS tree survey concluded that trees in Armada Way specifically were of varying condition ranging from I I categorised as dead/dying to some with 20+ years of further life, with one having 40+ years expected life remaining. Many trees were identified as causing impacts on footways and buildings, having restricted growth, being unable to reach their expected natural form, or have been pruned and pollarded severely. The tree survey also showed an over-provision of particular species beyond what would be considered good practice.

#### 2024

- 5.8. In January 2024, a tree survey update was undertaken by YGS Environmental Services on the current 43 trees located in Armada Way. This is included at Appendix F, with a summary of the categories included below:

Tree category	A High quality	B Moderate	C Low quality	U - Unsuitable for retention- dead or dying
Number	1	30	9	3

### Arboricultural Impact Assessment

#### 2023

- 5.9. In February 2023 an Arboricultural Impact Assessment was undertaken by YGS for the now withdrawn scheme. The table below outlines the tree removal then proposed to enable that scheme to progress, by category:

Tree category	A High quality	B Moderate	C Low quality	U - Unsuitable for retention- dead or dying
Removal	0	73	43 plus two tree groups	11

- 5.10. The February 2023 report concluded the following at the time in relation to the then proposed scheme: *“the Proposed Development has been designed to create a resilient, sustainable and socially valuable commercial area within Plymouth City Centre. In total, 24 tree features within the Site boundary are to be retained. 129 tree features are required for removal to facilitate the Proposed Development, formed of 127 individual trees and two minor tree groups. The removal of 129 tree features is anticipated to have a significant negative affect on Site amenity and local landscape character in the short-term. However, in the long-term, a significant increase in amenity is anticipated through provision of a significant new tree planting scheme facilitating seasonal variation, flowering, fruiting, bark interest, autumnal colour, leaf shape and colour differences, and a diverse mosaic spatial arrangement of tree heights, forms and overall sizes. The tree removals therefore represent a significant investment in the long-term amenity of ‘The Greenery’ within Armada Way, most notably in relation to increasing resilience.”*

#### 2024

- 5.11. An updated Arboricultural Impact Assessment is being undertaken in relation to the final scheme which is to follow. A Tree Protection Plan relating to the retained trees within the scheme is included at Appendix G.

## Preliminary Ecological Assessment

### 2017 / 2022

As part of the original investigatory assessment work for the Better Places programme of works in 2017, a preliminary ecological assessment (PEA) was undertaken by TOR Ecology. This was based on the original proposal for the scheme to run from North Cross to the Hoe.

5.12. The TOR PEA confirmed that:

- there was 'low potential only' for bats (roosting) and that species are unlikely to be present or assumed present at the site and that a detailed survey was not needed to clarify impacts and mitigation measures.
- that there was potential suitable habitat for breeding birds, and House sparrow, Herring Gull were present, but that further detailed study was not necessary in either instance.
- that there was no potential impact from the proposals on any non-statutory wildlife designations or non-statutory geological designations.
- that there would be no potential impact on any statutory designations, with the exception of Plymouth Sound and Estuary's SAC which was to be confirmed via the HRA screening process.

5.13. The TOR PEA report recommended:

- Undertaking a HRA screening once plans were finalised.
- Any required removal of vegetation suitable for nesting birds outside of bird breeding season, or preceded by a nesting to be checked by ecologists.
- Where trees identified within the report as having low bat roosting potential proposed for removal, that they should be soft felled.
- Provision made for the installation of biodiversity enhancement.
- Guidance to be followed in relation to lighting design to limit the negative impacts of it upon nocturnal wildlife, such as birds and bats.

5.14. A subsequent PEA report, both a new report and update to the existing from 2017, was undertaken by Simon Geary Ecology Services (SGES) in December 2022 to align with the now withdrawn scheme. The study was an extended Phase I Habitat Survey and included a bat tree roost assessment. This report was solely focused on the area between North Cross and Royal Parade.

5.15. The 2022 PEA report summarised that most of the habitats on the proposed development site are of *negligible ecological importance per se* and unlikely to support protected species (i.e. dwelling or resting space) on a permanent or long-term basis. The report states that:

- whilst trees and shrubs have higher ecological importance per se and provided habitat for flora and fauna, the city centre is subject to intensive management and high levels of human disturbance reducing the functionality for wildlife.
- some 15 trees planned to be felled contain potential for bat roost features and further survey is required to evaluate these trees prior to felling.
- At least one bird nest (presumed disused due to time of year) was recorded and therefore a pre-felling assessment should be undertaken for nesting birds' trees, which was undertaken pre-felling in March 2023.
- There should be an ecological watching brief during felling of identified trees depending on the results of the pre-felling surveys.
- That the redesign will include significant areas of new planting as part of compensation and biodiversity net gain measures.

## Bat Report

- 5.16. The SGES PEA identified low habitat potential for bats but recommended a further bat roost assessment. A further detailed endoscopic inspection of potential bat features to assess direct and indirect bat activity was commissioned by SGES and completed in 2023. The report confirmed that there were no signs of bats or bat roost constraints in the trees on Armada Way, concluding that there were therefore no further ecological constraints to tree felling required to facilitate the withdrawn plan, including important habitats or other protected species.
- 5.17. A new bat survey will be undertaken prior to the start of any construction works that involve either the translocation or working around retained trees.

## Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 5.18. The Council has always aimed to achieve 20% net gain for the Armada Way scheme, which exceeds the Council's policy requiring development to achieve at least 10% net gain. This is entirely voluntary given that the project is not subject to a planning application and is permitted development.
- 5.19. A full BNG assessment was undertaken by The Environment Partnership (TEP) of the withdrawn scheme using the recognised methodology (3.1). This resulted in a score of +8.58 area habitat and +0.45 hedgerow BNG units. The new scheme has, for the sake of comparison, been assessed against the previous recognised methodology on the same like-for-like basis. This results in the new scheme providing a total of +10.11 area habitat and +1.06 hedgerow units, which is a betterment of some 17% proportionally.
- 5.20. A new BNG assessment tool has recently been released under the 4.0 metric. The new scheme has been assessed under this metric, which has resulted in a score of -39% without appropriate mitigation. The report recommends mitigation for the Council to achieve its voluntary target of 20% net gain as result of the Armada Way scheme. As a result, the City Council has committed to the planting 525 new trees. This would, when combined with the scheme itself, provide a net gain of **20.53%**.

## Impact of new metric

- 5.21. The TEP report outlines that the net loss calculated for the scheme, as against the >20% on the withdrawn scheme, is a result of different mechanics of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, specifically differences in the way measurements for individual trees are recorded, in combination with the delays which have occurred to the reinstatement of habitat following removal. The report is also clear that the new scheme does present a 'betterment' in biodiversity value compared to the withdrawn scheme. In regard to measurements for individual trees, changes to the way calculations of existing tree size are considered, including changes to state that newly planted trees must be considered as 'small' (even if an advanced age of nursery stock) cannot be used to apply an 'advanced habitat creation' factor. In addition to this, a habitat creation delay has been applied to the assessment as there has been a delay in implementing the proposed scheme of up to three years post the original removal works. The delays of implementing the scheme has therefore resulted in an overall reduction in the biodiversity unit value of the final landscape scheme as a consequence of penalty weightings within the metric.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

### Withdrawn scheme

- 5.22. An application under Regulation 77 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations was submitted together with associated information pertaining to Environmental Management Plan and Construction Methodology associated with the withdrawn scheme. This application requires the local planning authority (LPA) to undertake an appropriate assessment which is submitted to Natural England to understand the impact of the construction works on the Plymouth Sound and Estuary's protected area. The LPA received confirmation from Natural England that there was no likely significant effect on the special protected area from the construction works proposed at that time.

### **New Scheme**

- 5.23. A follow up application associated with the new scheme, the subject of this Cabinet Report, was submitted to Natural England under Regulation 76 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. This included a HRA addendum technical note by WSP containing the latest scheme drawings and updated Construction and Environmental Management Plan. Having considered the revisions to the scheme provided in the documents, Natural England's opinion is that the revised scheme will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site, providing that mitigation measures are appropriately secured. Natural England's response is included at Appendix P.

### **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report**

- 5.24. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening report was undertaken by WSP in May 2023 and considers that whilst the development could potentially fall into 10(b) of Schedule 2 'Urban Development' it does not reach the required threshold to trigger an EIA assessment process and was therefore screened out.
- 5.25. A further EIA has been undertaken for the new scheme and reaches the same conclusion. The determination section of the report identifies that the *"main impacts from the Proposed Development are likely to occur during the construction stage. Construction will likely lead to impacts to receptors, including users of the city centre and other receptors as outlined in Appendix A [of the report]. Most environmental effects caused by construction can be mitigated using standard environmental controls which have been outlined in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), such as restrictions on working times, dust management plans, temporary drainage plans and noise complaint procedures."*
- 5.26. The determination continues to state that the *"Proposed Development is unlikely to have any effects on any of the surrounding designated sites as outlined in the Site and Surrounding Area section above due to the nature and scale of the Proposed Development. Views from listed buildings will most likely be unaffected as the Site area is largely screened on either side from existing retails and commercial buildings, potential impacts on setting have been considered during the design process and has been designed to enhance the surrounding heritage assets and Plymouth City Conservation Area. Drainage changes from the Proposed Development are likely to improve any existing pathways to the Plymouth Sound and during construction standard construction mitigation should be adhered to and documented within a CEMP to ensure impact is reduced sufficiently."*
- 5.27. In regard to the original trees on Armada Way, the determination outlines that there is *"potential for adverse environmental effects due to the removal of trees, although these trees are not protected by Tree Protection Orders (TPO) and are not located in a conservation area. The loss of trees will likely lead to a short-term impact on habitats and biodiversity and visual amenity; however the Proposed Development aims to achieve a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as well as replanting lost habitat. This will ensure that overall, the Proposed Development will have a positive improvement on the existing Biodiversity on Site as demonstrated in the Soft Landscaping Proposals. An Arboricultural Method Statement will be produced which will outline measures to protect retained trees on site which includes one Category A tree, twenty-nine Category B trees, six Category C trees and three Category U trees. During operation the effect of the tree removal will persist until new planting establishes, this can be partially mitigated for by planting semi-mature species which has been committed to in the soft landscaping proposals. The effect of tree removal will be negated once new planting is established. Adverse effects which will be temporary in nature, lasting*

*up to 25 years although the duration may decrease dependent on maturity of planted specimens and aftercare. On establishment the trees can be expected to offset the adverse effects, or to result in overall environmental gain, aiming for 20% and an increase in visual amenity. At this point, the effect will likely be a beneficial one to both biodiversity and more immediate ecology.”*

- 5.28. The EIA screening report concludes by stating that “Based on the understanding of the design of the Proposed Development, it is not located in an environmentally “sensitive area” as defined by the EIA Regulations (Part 1 Regulation 2), and that any potential for likely significant adverse effects will be mitigated through measures as outlined in Appendix A [of the report]. On this basis the Proposed Development is not considered to constitute EIA development.” This report is located at Appendix J

## 6. A NEW SCHEME



6.1. In October 2023, the Council launched the new Armada Way scheme for consultation. The scheme aims to reinvigorate and renew Armada Way through creating a space that brings life back to the heart of the city. The scheme, which had been subject to an extensive 6-week consultation (outlined in detail later within this report) has the following key principles and objectives at its core:

- **Recapture the scale and grandeur of Armada Way** – providing a gateway to the city centre, linking the train station to The Hoe as was the original ambition and intent.
- **More trees and greenery** – there are proposed to be 50 more trees than there were previously on Armada Way (before the felling). The new trees will all be 3.5 to 8 metres high when planted, to give immediate environmental benefits and a canopy to provide cover.
- **Helping wildlife and nature** – through provision of a variety of trees, creating a range of habitats, shrubs, wildflowers and reed beds, as well as bug hotels and bird boxes.
- **Huge play village for families** – the scheme includes for a unique destination play village, proposed to be equivalent to the size of five tennis courts. The play village will be full of spaces and opportunities to run, splash, balance, swing, climb, relax and sit, for children of all ages and their carers/parents to enjoy.
- **Working smartly to deal with the city’s rainwater** – an extensive new surface water drainage system will be included, powered by solar panels to make it sustainable. The system will utilise rain gardens and attenuation tanks before circulating to irrigate the new trees.
- **Improved safety for all** – as part of improving the evening experience, we are proposing installation of lighting columns between 12 and 15m tall throughout the corridor, with feature lighting and up-lighting to plants, along with projections onto the ground. A much-improved CCTV system and clear, uninterrupted views across Armada Way will help to deter anti-social behaviour.
- **Places to sit, relax and eat** – there will be a range of different seating opportunities, with spaces for around 500 people to sit.
- **Cycling path for people of all abilities** - a new, direct north-south cycle path is proposed to cater for cyclists of all abilities, along with cycle racks and Beryl Bike hubs.



- **Pop-up spaces with water and power** – a range of different accessible pop-up spaces will be available for retail, arts and entertainment.

6.2. The Council believes this scheme will be transformational for the city centre, acting as a significant catalyst in promoting the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of the city centre. This has been reiterated with numerous partners and statutory consultees. The new scheme seeks to address a number of fundamental overarching objectives, as outlined below.

### Conservation and Heritage

- 6.3. Armada Way was always intended to be the jewel in the public realm crown of the newly rebuilt city centre. Over time through piecemeal interventions, the ambition of the ‘grand boulevard’ between the railway station and the Hoe had largely been lost. The new scheme has been designed to recognise and celebrate the original purpose of Armada Way as the showpiece element of public realm within the Abercrombie Beaux-Arts grid. Importantly however, this is not a copy of the original design which had strong merits as a piece of 1940’s planning, and nor is it intended to be.
- 6.4. The new scheme utilises the fundamental design and layout principles of the Abercrombie Plan whilst recognising that the scheme is aimed at achieving a modern, adaptable and future proofed city centre environment. Of upmost importance in ensuring that we achieve the desired heritage and conservation ambitions of the scheme will be the reintroduction of the long vista towards the Hoe. The scheme has been deliberately designed to allow for a wide, clear central viewing corridor which is maintained at 12 metres in width through the core section. This will allow for the clear, uninterrupted historical view towards the Naval War Memorial and Smeatons Tower from the point that visitors exit North Cross subway, and from even further north towards the railway station. This will be the ‘visitors guide’ as was the original intent for Armada Way.
- 6.5. The central 12-metre-wide section will be formed of the continual central pedestrian axial route, flanked in various iterations by the north-south cycle route and the sustainable drainage system stream. Adjacent to these elements will be a variety of spaces in the form of ‘parterres’, a reflection of the geometry of the original plan where spaces were broken down into squares and rectangular sub-divisions. The 12-metre clear corridor will be maintained through an off-set of planting within these spaces, allowing for the trees to mature and grow successfully without impeding on the line of sight. An area of exception where it will be slightly narrower is where retained trees are located north of the subterranean toilets.
- 6.6. The layout and repeated pattern of tree planting in the scheme has been designed to reflect the original boulevard style planting arrangement that was envisaged for Armada Way. Whilst efforts have been made to avoid the use of purely fastigate tree species (outlined further within this report), the tree species have been chosen to provide a more upright form, whilst providing a good level of canopy cover. The arrangement of trees is set within two defined corridors of planting, with multiple compositions within these corridors such as double or triple staggered trees, or single lone specimens in key areas. It is important to note that whilst the internal arrangement of trees within the two corridors changes to provide interest and variety, the strength and rigidity of the corridor itself remains, providing the overall desired boulevard effect. Again, this is a contemporary take on the original Abercrombie Plan of single tree line boulevard planting, utilising the historical guidelines and intent but making it more sustainable, greener and more diverse.
- 6.7. One significant remaining feature of the original plan for Armada Way is the area surrounding the Phoenix fountain and the Braille Garden. The scheme seeks to reimagine the use of this space, whilst retaining its key historical design features. The plan will open up the formerly enclosed area around the Phoenix fountain, allowing for the continual axial pedestrian route through the middle. This heightened vantage point will present a long view from the highest part of Armada Way in

the design. The existing walls and structures will be retained where possible, whilst integrating the new staggered seating of the amphitheatre space.

- 6.8. The Phoenix fountain itself will be restored and brought back into operational use. The original stone Phoenix, which has been missing for many decades, leaving behind a stump and a fountain base filled with soil and weeds, will be restored with a new stone statue. This, combined with the mosaic patterning to the internal base of the fountain, and the restoration of the original jet patterning around its edges, will allow the Phoenix fountain to once again be the welcoming entrance, accompanied by the gentle sound and movement of water, to Armada Way as it was.
- 6.9. Formerly, the buildings along Armada Way were largely concealed which was impacting on building facades and blocking views toward (and from) them. Many of the buildings along Armada Way, particularly in key areas, are excellent examples of post-war design and architecture with intrinsic and unique details on their facades. The 2014 Heritage Audit of the City Centre listed many of the buildings in this area as of particular note and importance. The new design will allow for better interpretation of the buildings, and through being exposed, will encourage building owners to clean and repair their buildings. This process has already been started with the buildings in the Conservation Area such as Norwich Union House and of importance to Armada Way specifically, Pearl Assurance House.



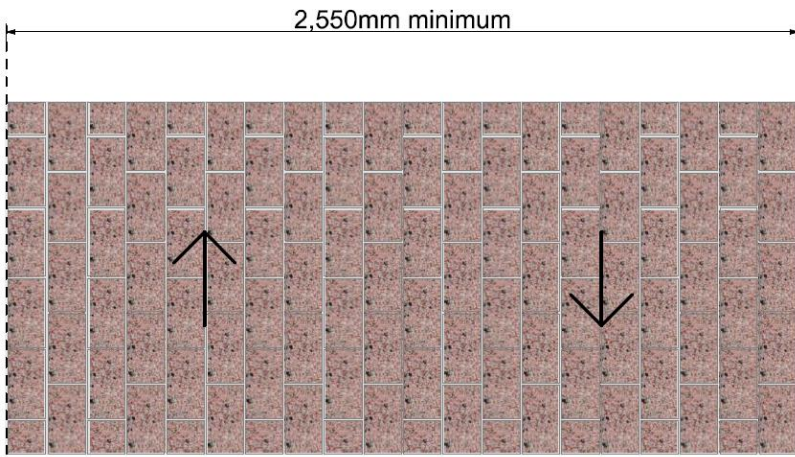
### Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

- 6.10. Encouraging more active and sustainable travel to, from and within the City Centre itself is a key priority for the Council. To achieve this, we need to invest in high quality pedestrian, cycle and public transport facilities. A fundamental objective of the scheme is to create an environment where pedestrians and cyclists are able to travel along Armada Way safely, removing the obstacles that currently exist for both modes.
- 6.11.

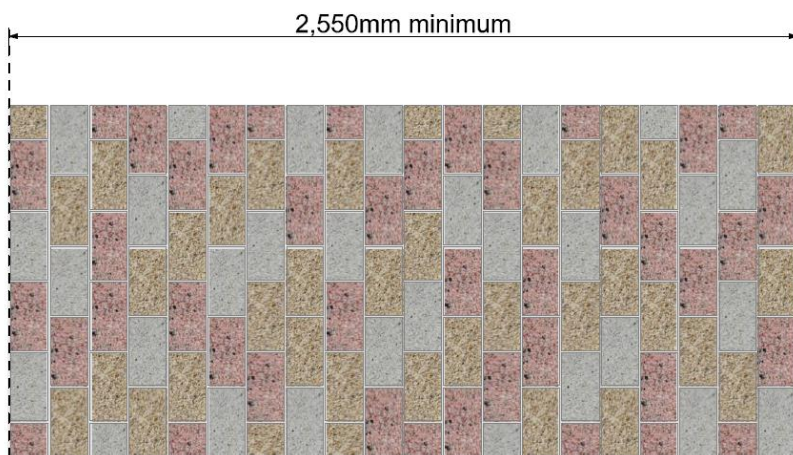


Visual of cycle route (prior to granite tone amendment)

- 6.12. Armada Way is a well-used route for cyclists, and this has increased with the use of Beryl bikes and mobility hubs in the city centre area. Of primary importance to the scheme, and a requirement of the funding received from the Department for Transport, is the provision of a new cycle and pedestrian route through the centre. The objective of the cycle way is to connect the railway station, via North Cross through the city centre toward the Hoe via the new route being constructed at Civic Square. The cycle way will also connect in with new cycle routes at New George Street. This high quality defined route will enable more people to access the city centre by bicycle, both from the station, university and surrounding residential neighbourhoods. In addition, putting in place a significant piece of new sustainable transport infrastructure in the form of a direct cycle route will facilitate significant new mixed-use development in the city centre which is of strategic importance for the economic growth of the city.
- 6.13. The cycle way has been subject to critical design and review processes assessing it against the numerous opportunities and options that exist. Given the multiple other complex interactions taking place within the scheme, it is considered that the current proposal meets all the necessary requirements and addresses the various balances that need to be made. Of crucial importance is that the cycle way has been designed to be compliant with LTN 1/20. In a highly urban city centre environment such as Armada Way, LTN 1/20 recommends a 'soft segregation' approach which has been adopted. The scheme has been independently assessed by AECOM as being LTN 1/20 compliant. It has also been assessed and endorsed by Active Travel England. Active Travel England undertook a Link Assessment which considered the quality of the walking and cycling elements of the scheme before and after intervention. Overall, ATE have scored the link as improving from 44% to 62%, with the scoring for 'Placemaking' increasing significantly from 67% to 94%. The outcome of the assessment has resulted in a strong endorsement of the scheme. Some further amendments to address areas which could score even higher have been reviewed and included as part of the final scheme, as outlined below.
- 6.14. Detailed plans showing the proposed alignment and materiality of the new cycle way is included at Appendix R. A second plan provides detail on the cross-sectional arrangements at various locations along Armada Way.
- 6.15. Running from north to south, the cycle way will be a minimum width of 2550mm along the entire length where it is segregated or defined as a route within shared spaces. This accords with the requirements set out in LTN 1/20 for widths against maximum expected two-way cycle movements. The new route will not be split into north and south bound travel directions but will provide a continuous width for cyclists travelling in either direction. This allows for manoeuvring around wider or slower moving cycles without having to stray into the opposite direction lane, thereby enhancing the routes ease of use.



Dark Pink 120mm x 220mm granite sett paving - Bush hammered finish



Randomised grey, pink and buff 120mm x 220mm granite sett paving to identify and give warning of pedestrian intersections

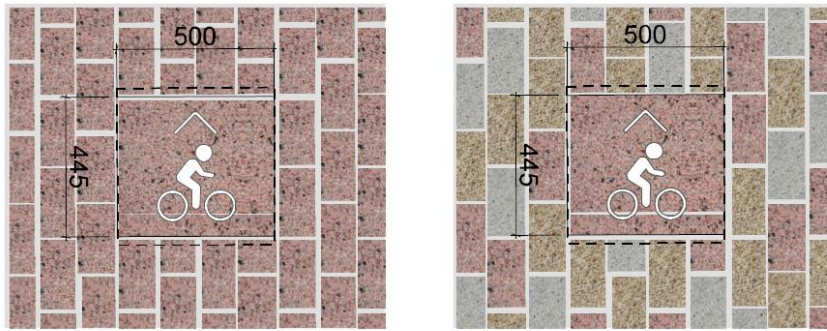
6.16. In discussions on detailed elements of the scheme with Sustrans and picking up on observations made during the consultation period by individuals and other groups, it was decided that the cycle way should be enhanced so as to stand out significantly from the other hard surfaced areas of the scheme. This will be achieved through enhanced wayfinding and waymarking for cyclists, but also expressed strongly visually through the provision of a dark pink granite to denote the cycleway. Dark pink has been introduced to Armada Way specifically to define the cycle areas, so that there cannot be any ambiguity over the delineation of spaces. This will also assist the visually impaired to pick out more easily the pedestrian vs cycle areas. At points of pedestrian intersection, the dark pink granite will be interspersed with the grey and buff granites used to define the pedestrian and special public realm areas. This will give a better

understanding and impression when combined with appropriate signage that both pedestrians and cyclists are entering a shared priority area. Incidents of where these are located have been minimised where possible, however will always be necessary in some locations given the nature of a city centre environment where the cycle way will be required to transverse various spaces, whilst also allowing for east-west pedestrian movement across the 40-60m wide Armada Way corridor.

6.17. Starting at North Cross upon exiting the subway and entering the Phoenix fountain and Braille Garden area, the cycle way will be clearly signed by way-markers in ground and at surface level, and monoliths to show the expected use of the space by cyclists and pedestrians.

6.18. The cycle way starts at the top of the Phoenix fountain area, where it begins to run along the eastern side of the new amphitheatre space before crossing through the eastern edge of the shared performance space area. At the approach to the shared area, as with all instances along the scheme where the area becomes shared with pedestrians, tactile information in the form of linear and blister paving will be used to indicate the changes in

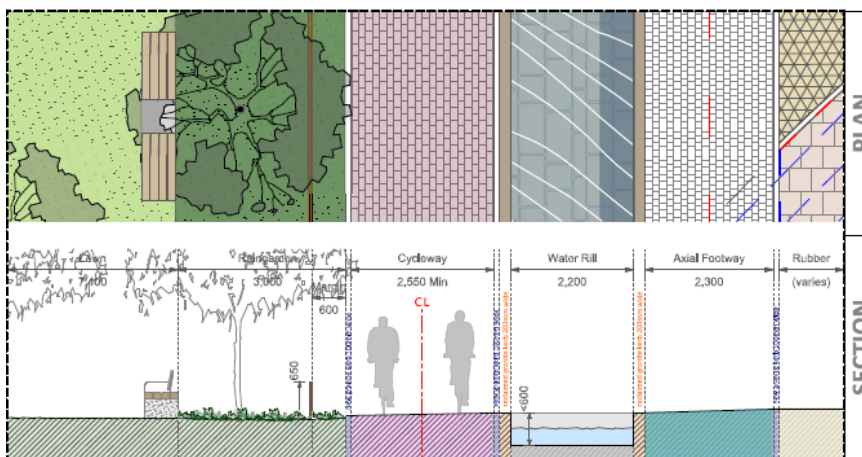




priority of the space. The cycle way continues along the eastern edge of the first raised parterre, defined by a trapezoidal cycle kerb where it runs directly adjacent to a pedestrian area.

6.19. The route then continues along one of two chicane alignments which is

aimed at reducing speeds of cyclists, particularly important in this section of Armada Way where the gradient is steepest. The cycle route runs adjacent to planting on one side and a reed bed on the other, before crossing the central pedestrian axial route and the continual north-south SuDS rill. As part of amendments for the final design, the east-west footway which previously crossed the cycle lane and axial pedestrian routes at this location have been removed and replaced with extended areas of accessible public realm, blocked off from the cycle way. This is following design discussions with Sustrans, and feedback from individuals and groups who were concerned at the risk of conflict. By removing the east-west pedestrian path at this location, and replacing with public realm areas, it will effectively remove a risk of conflict from pedestrians walking east or west with cyclists, who may already be viewing forwards toward the central route. This approach has been replicated at the other chicane crossing point at the southern end of the scheme to reduce risk of conflict, with some resulting enhancements to planting and public realm as identified later. The changes to the design will improve visibility for cyclists.



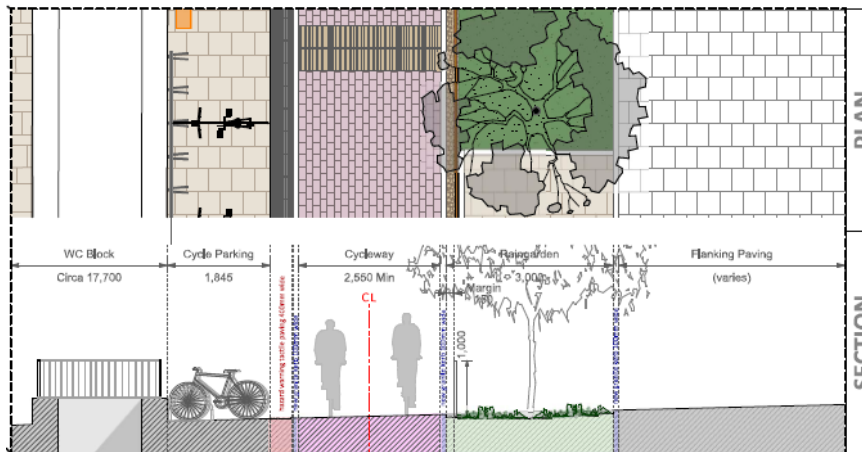
Example cross-section through central area

6.20. Continuing south the cycle way will run adjacent to raised parterres on one side, with the SuDS rill on the other. Where the cycle way runs adjacent to a vertical surface, additional width is provided by way of a verge treatment in accordance with LTN 1/20 guidance to allow extra space for handlebars and peddles.

6.21. On the approach to Mayflower Street crossing, the cycle way will change in tone to reflect the highway, and this will be accommodated by a change in surface type to create a 'rumble' effect to make cyclists aware. This is the only point that the cycle way crosses an operational highway open to the public. The crossing point over Mayflower Street will be on a raised table, and signalisation is not considered necessary given that both vehicle speeds and traffic volume is low. This will be subject to a full Road Safety Audit process once the final design has been approved. Adjacent to the crossing area slightly east of the cycle and pedestrian path will be a mobility hub. This will not only include Beryl bike parking as with other mobility hubs but will also include a number of Sheffield Stands for cycle parking by the public with their own bicycles.

6.22. After crossing Mayflower Street, the route continues along the western side of the central route adjacent to planted areas of the multi-use and pop-up spaces on one side with the SuDS rill forming a continuous edge on the other. The cycle way crosses an east-west pedestrian path and through the 'Drakes Leat' area before approaching Place de Brest. At Place de Brest, tactile information makes cyclists aware they are approaching a shared space, and the route under the new solar

canopies and continue directly through the space indicated by a contrasting tone in the granite surfacing.



Cross-section at location of cycle parking close to Sundial

6.23. Continuing south, the route continues to run along the western side of the central path, again segregated by planting to one side and the SuDS rill to the other. The route then enters a chicane, which is required again as a speed reduction measure, but also to bring the cycle lane back across to the eastern side of Armada Way where it ultimately connects in with the route along New George Street. As

with the chicane further north, the east-west cross footway has been removed at the point where the cycle lane, central axial route and cycle way intersect to reduce the risk of conflict with pedestrians further. Through removing this path, areas of public realm and greenspace have increased.

- 6.24. The cycle way then continues south towards the sundial where the soft segregated route ends. At this point, where the cycle way runs under the solar shelters on either side of the toilet block, there is opportunity for undercover cycle parking. From this point on, following discussions with external and internal cycling experts, the cycle route will be demarked in the ground as an advisory route through the piazza. This is due to the width of the piazza where there is considered acceptable space for cyclists to navigate sharing the space with pedestrians. This is akin to the arrangement currently being proposed at New George and Old Town Street. The cycle route does not cross the sundial due to this being a key node with a high concentration of pedestrians moving in many different directions, so to have a cyclist moving at speed directly across this space would be hazardous.
- 6.25. The exact locations and quantum of cycle parking throughout the scheme will be reviewed during the design refinement process and will consist of Sheffield Stands and cycle loops mounted to lighting columns, as well as the aforementioned locations.

### Environmental Sustainability

- 6.26. Long-term environmental sustainability is at the heart of the plan for Armada Way. This is reflected in the green spaces and planting, tree numbers and species selection, through to the vast scale of the SuDS system, provision of enabling infrastructure for large scale implementation of the district heating system and upgrading of lighting infrastructure. Some of these points are addressed in further detail within the Climate Change and Climate Resilience chapter.
- 6.27. A considerable amount of new green infrastructure is proposed for the Armada Way scheme. This includes a total of 202 trees in the corridor, a considerable increase on the 153 trees that previously existed in Armada Way. This represents a significant investment in the long-term sustainability of the green estate of the city centre and upon establishment will provide considerable canopy volume, shade and other environmental benefits. This amount of tree planting will also sequester a considerable volume of carbon from these trees.
- 6.28. The scheme includes for a large amount of underplanting, which is proposed to largely be a mixture of herbaceous perennials that will contribute ground cover and enhancing biodiversity through selection of floriferous plants. Appropriate underplanting will also attract insects and pollinators to Armada Way, enhancing the local ecology. The importance of underplanting was

raised by Food Plymouth during the consultation with various detailed suggestions made. These will be taken into account in future discussions with this group as the specific detail progresses.

- 6.29. New habitats which have never formerly existed in the city centre area are being introduced within the final scheme. This includes a number of wildflower meadow spaces, which will be a mixture of native and ornamental to encourage not only year-round interest but also long-term benefits for nature in Armada Way. Another new addition is a series of reedbeds which, whilst being associated with filtering water as part of the SuDS network, will also be home to variety of invertebrates and other animals who rely on slow moving water. The reedbeds also reduce reliance on chemicals and mechanical filtration which enhance the sustainability of the SuDS network overall.
- 6.30. Energy sustainability is also something which has been considered through the design process of the final scheme. Eight new solar shelters are proposed to be included at Place de Brest and on either side of the existing subterranean toilets, which will be covered by large solar arrays. These arrays will power the SuDS system during day mode, reducing the amount of energy required from the grid to power the pump systems associated with the SuDS network.
- 6.31. The SuDS network is a significant intervention and plays a central role in the long-term benefits arising from the scheme. It was considered early in the design process that, given the nature of the city centre's drainage issues, and the commitment of the Council to creating new sustainable drainage systems within the new public realm schemes, that providing a purely ornamental water feature which circulated chemically treated water would not have been acceptable environmentally.
- 6.32. The proposed new SuDS infrastructure for Armada Way is enormous in scale. It provides an ornamental stream with a comprehensive sustainable drainage system which stores and reuses water in the most advantageous way possible for watering our green spaces. In this innovative new system, rainwater landing on the hard surfacing of Armada Way will be channelled either into the green spaces, or the stream, from which it will be stored in refurbished underground storage tanks which exist from the original 1980's ornamental watercourse. This circulating of naturally filtered water will provide the ornamental running water noise and visual appearance but will serve a critically important role in the long-term management of our rainwater. In night-mode, the water stored in the tanks will re-circulate to water the trees. Armada Way has good infiltration rates in most areas where investigations have been undertaken. The scheme will seek to enhance this where possible so that water that, once having been used to water the trees, will permeate downwards into the strata.
- 6.33. Given the importance of the scheme to the development of the city centre, the brief to be tested by expert hydrology and civil engineers is to accommodate a 1 in 100 year + 40% for climate change flooding events in developing the design. It would therefore have to be an extreme weather event to overwhelm the system. This will not only reduce the amount of water entering the combined sewer system, leading to discharge events into our National Marine Park, but will release capacity for future, more sustainable city centre residential development which is a priority for the Council.
- 6.34. Both the Environment Agency and South West Water fully support the plans and will continue working with the project team throughout the ongoing refinement of the design work to the SuDS system. Further detailed design work on the SuDS network is ongoing, and involves testing of flow rates, capacities, infiltration rates and more. South West Water will also be undertaking repairs to their own infrastructure whilst the groundworks are being undertaken for the Armada Way scheme. This will involve replacing broken and collapsed infrastructure which currently exists in the corridor. South West Water have said that *"It is a strategic priority of SWW to reduce the current use of Combined Sewer Overflows. Reducing potential surface water flows from development sites into the combined sewer network will be crucial to achieving this aim. Additionally, maximising the use of surface and rainwater on-site will aid in reducing flows entering the sewer network."*
- 6.35. This extensive work being undertaken is part of the ongoing, wider plan for managing water in the city centre. South West Water confirmed that *"In the future we will be developing a planned collaborative scheme with PCC and the EA to install a new surface water pumping station at Millbay and*

implement a scheme to pick up and attenuate surface water connections from the City Centre, including the SuDS outlined in this proposal for Armada Way.” They continue, stating that “The Armada Way proposal has been developed with collaboration in mind to enable simple connections at a later date, with consideration for potentially taking this proposal further enabling complete surface water separation from the combined sewer network at a later date.”

- 6.36. The Environment Agency have also responded to the proposals positively, stating that the scheme has been “a long-awaited project and provides significant benefits for our areas of focus”. They go on to state that “Armada Way is in an area where most of the rainwater falling on the urban area is routed into the combined drainage system, being pumped, and treated at Plymouth Central sewerage works. Our joint aim is to create a new surface water drainage system within this area to allow surface water to be separated from the current combined system. This project is an excellent opportunity to realise this outcome. The focus on water management with inclusion of the new Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) incorporated into the overall landscaping plan is very much welcomed. This provides a new system for surface water and helps achieve our joint aims. This system is designed for the future, with the ability to manage increasing rainfall associated with climate change and helps support periods of prolonged dry weather. In addition to managing the rainwater falling on Armada Way, this project is key to delivering the wider new strategic surface water drainage system for the city centre. Armada Way is a key jigsaw piece in the overall strategy as it will receive drainage from the new systems in the northeast part of the city centre. We are aware that the project’s design team are working on these drainage designs, which will link into the works in New George Street and other systems to be constructed in the future.”
- 6.37. Environmental sustainability has been considered as being of paramount importance to the future ambitions of creating a futureproofed Armada Way, with some very considerable interventions to ensure that this is both realistic and deliverable.

## Climate Change and Climate Resilience



- 6.38. Met Office data has shown that the South-West is experiencing almost 10% more rainfall across the year than was experienced in 1961. It has also shown that seasonal rainfall is highly variable, but since 1961 has decreased by around 9% in summer, with an increase of around 28% in autumn and 16% in winter. Winters in the South-West are now also milder, with on average almost 21 fewer days of air frost than in 1961. These figures represent the changing climate of our region,



and the challenges which we are likely to experience continuing into the future. It is therefore important that the final scheme for Armada Way is as resilient to climate change as possible.

6.39. The scheme has been designed to be responsive to the existing and future challenges of a changing climate, enabling the city centre area to become more resilient to environmental and climatic changes. Enabling this resilience is reliant upon the Council implementing an array of fully integrated interventions along Armada Way, including:

- **Implementing an extensive, large scale Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS):** The Armada Way SuDS network integrated into the fabric of the new scheme covers an area around 500 metres in length through the core of the most expansive hard standing in the city. The city centre itself is identified as a Critical Drainage Area, reflecting that the post-war combined sewer system is 'at capacity' and therefore there is a requirement to use water smartly. This is a significant challenge when dealing with an area of this scale and complexity and requires removing surface water from the combined sewer system, releasing a huge amount of capacity to allow for mixed use, residential led development in the city centre. Reducing the amount of surface water entering the combined sewer system through capturing rainfall that hits Armada Way will also reduce pressure downstream, ultimately reducing the volume of water currently discharged into Plymouth Sound during heavy rainfall events. The scheme has been designed to slow down, and store large volumes of water using surface SuDS infrastructure such as rain gardens and the reedbeds, which will themselves act as exceedance roots in exceptional rainfall events, as well as providing for storage of large volumes underground in refurbished storage tanks. Using the water wisely through an intelligent SuDS network allows us to reuse water for the irrigation of our new green spaces and trees, providing a circular and more natural way of handling our water. The importance of this scheme has been recognised by the Environment Agency who stated that: *"Overall this project's aims are well aligned with Government's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England, by increasing the resilience to climate change by utilising sustainable drainage solutions. This will help manage flood risk to the Union Street area by improved water management and capacity. The project also supports the Government's storm overflow discharge reduction plan by the removal of surface water from the combined drainage system, which will maintain improved bathing water quality in Plymouth Sound."* South West Water have already recognised how the SuDS network contributes to key objectives relating to water use, stating that *"SWW support the inclusion of sustainable water management through the inclusion of SuDS, rain gardens and rainwater harvesting. As Climate Change progresses, we are seeing increased impacts on our water resources and on the landscape itself. With the expected trend of hotter and drier summers, and wetter and milder winters, there is an increased risk of flood and drought cycles becoming a more regular occurrence. Utilising rainwater gardens and rainwater storage will aid in reducing surface water run-off during flood events, reducing potential flows into the sewer network."*
- **SuDS stream and associated infrastructure:** A critical element of the new SuDS network and its effective operation is the 'stream' and its associated infrastructure such as the reed beds which enable it to work properly. The system will be largely gravity operated but will be powered during day-mode by solar power generation. The stream connects all of the various SuDS elements together and is fully integrated with the proposed reed beds. These will act as carbon sequesters in themselves, serving an important role in filtering the surface rainwater run-off, supplemented by UV light, to ensure it uses as low amount of energy as possible.
- **Strategic Walking and Cycling Improvements:** encouraging more people to walk and cycle is critical to reduce emissions from private car use travelling into and out of the city centre. The proposed high-quality walking and cycling link directly through the middle of the city centre, connecting the centre with its surroundings and joining in with other cycle connections around the city centre is key to achieving this. The new cycle route will also join in with the National Cycle Network and other cycling projects the Council is delivering

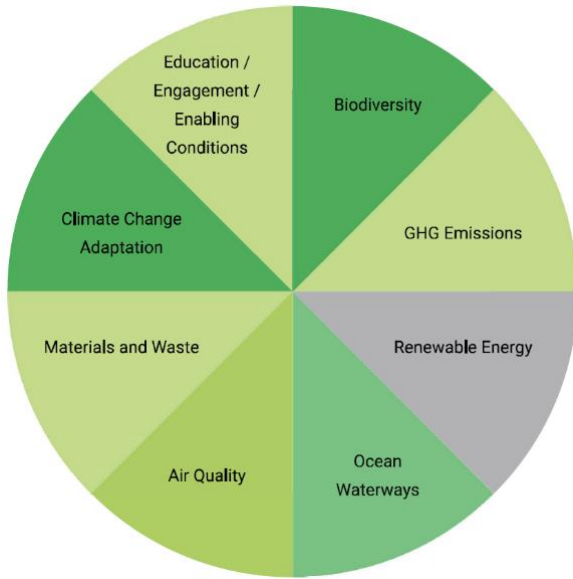
through the “Transforming Cities Fund” programme. Looking to the future, through putting in such high-quality links before development takes place along Armada Way and surrounding streets, the Council can help to enable and facilitate low or zero car residential development. This would include promotion of travel by more sustainable methods, including public transport which will be more easily accessible following the improvements, ultimately reduce emissions associated with new development.

- **New Tree Planting:** The scheme includes a total of 202 trees, including 39 existing trees and 163 new trees of up to 8 metres in height. This is accompanied by extensive planting at ground level to enhance biodiversity and capture rainfall. The existing and new trees will contribute significantly to addressing the issue of climate change and resilience in the city centre, as they have been specifically chosen to be able to thrive in a harsh city centre environment where the adverse effects of climate change in the longer term will be particularly pertinent. They will also sequester a considerable amount of carbon over their lifespans, as well as providing usable areas of shade through extensive volume of canopy. South West Water commented that *“The current Armada Way proposal includes use of urban trees for biodiversity net gain and support of wildlife in the city centre; however, SWW would also highlight their use for carbon storage, solar and temperature regulation. Particularly within urban centres where the urban heat island effect will be exacerbated by Climate Change. The use of strategic deciduous tree placement would enable solar regulation during summers and maximum solar gain during winters. Especially during the summer period, reducing the impact of the urban heat island effect will assist in reducing the need for water to compensate for the increased temperatures, assisting in the sustainable management of our water resources.”*
- **Solar Canopies:** The scheme includes for eight canopies with solar panel roofs, the power from which will be used to power the SuDS pumps when operating in day mode. This will reduce the reliance of the SuDS network on drawing energy from the grid. South West Water stated that *“The scheme mentions use of solar power to help the Council’s Net Zero aspirations [which] is supported by SWW. It is essential that Net Zero is achieved to minimise the impacts of Climate Change.”*
- **Energy Efficient Lighting:** The scheme includes for the provision of high-mast low energy LED lantern streetlights. These will replace the aging building mounted lighting and will be more environmentally friendly and use less energy.
- **Enabling District Heating:** According to the 2022 report by Regen SW, 38% of Plymouth’s carbon emissions are related to heating and cooling. The scheme seeks to futureproof Armada Way and all sites along it to allow for future integration of the district heating system which is currently being rolled out across the city. The project will play a critical role by allowing for space beneath ground for district heating system ducting through provision of soft dig areas and beneath road crossings which are required to be excavated for the SuDS system and utility connections during construction. This will allow development to plug into the system as it comes forward, reducing carbon emissions considerably.
- **Recycle and Reuse:** The scheme proposes to reuse large quantities of the existing hard landscaping materials which exist in Armada Way where they are robust and of suitable quality. This will help to reduce the in-built carbon cost of the scheme and has the potential to reduce the amount of imported materials and associated carbon expenditure involved in transportation. This includes reusing the hundreds of granite kerbs, high quality setts, blocks and boulders.

**Climate Impact Assessment**

6.40. A climate impact assessment has been undertaken on the scheme and is included at Appendix C of this document. The assessment concludes that nature is at the heart of the new scheme and climate impact has been considered throughout the design process. It indicates that the scheme aims to improve biodiversity through a variety of trees and a range of habitats, shrubs, wildflowers and reed beds as well as bug hotels and bird boxes. It states that the two key drivers for the scheme are the installation of a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SuDS) and the principle of using water wisely, and the promotion of active travel with a new cycle path to cater for cyclists of all abilities. The assessment indicates that the additional power required for the ornamental water feature will come from solar panels to help make the scheme more carbon neutral. The

assessment concludes that the benefits offered by the scheme are long-term, reaching beyond 2030. In relation to biodiversity the scheme scores 5 out of 5. In relation to Green House Gas emissions the Armada Way scheme scores 4 out of 5. In relation to renewable energy, it scores 3 out of 5. In relation to ocean and waterways the scheme scores 5 out of 5, and in relation to air quality, it scores 4 out of 5. In relation to Minerals and Waste it scores 4 out of 5. On Climate Change Adaptation the project scores 5 out of 5. Lastly, in relation to Education/Engagement and Enabling Conditions it also scores 4 out of 5. The definition of the scoring range is outlined below:



Wheel Key

- Long lasting or severe negative impact
- Short term or limited negative impact
- No impact or neutral impact
- Short term or limited positive impact
- Long lasting or extensive positive impact

**Net Zero Action Plan (2022-25)**

- 6.41. Plymouth City Council Councillors voted unanimously on 18 March 2019 to declare a climate emergency, committing the Council to meet the most significant challenge facing the city and our planet through achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. The latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is very clear that limiting global warming to 1.5°C by 2030 is necessary to prevent significant global worsening of floods, droughts and extreme heat. The Council recognises the opportunities that the city has to lead on de-carbonisation, promoting the agenda through delivery and local vision. This is a big challenge and huge changes will need to be made. Our action plans show what we intend to do to cut down emissions in our direct control and to encourage the rest of the city to do the same.
- 6.42. The Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) is a three-year delivery plan, setting out the City Council’s proposals to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. It responds to the Net Zero Plymouth challenge set out on the Climate Connections Plymouth website and explains how the City Council will aim to play its part in delivering the Plymouth Plan’s policy aim that Plymouth achieve net zero by 2030. The NZAP replaces the annual Climate Emergency Action Plans and Corporate Carbon Reduction Plans published since 2019.
- 6.43. As outlined, the Armada Way project has environmental and climatic resilience as a driving ambition. The scheme will assist in the city being able to deliver reductions in greenhouse gases,

whilst sequestering carbon and taking a significant step forward in becoming a green, sustainable city which takes a long-term view on caring for the environment.

- 6.44. Plymouth city centre is a highly urban environment with a significant amount of both flat rooftops and extensive public realm areas as a result of the post-war wide boulevards. Armada Way is a large part of the city centre surfaced area, representing the largest expanse of hard surfacing in the city overall. The city centre itself contributes to and is affected by many emissions into the urban atmosphere; these come from the buildings and their respective heating and cooling plants, a mix of light industrial uses, the extensive, multi-lane highway network which acts as a 'ring road' around the central city centre area, and the many cars, buses and vehicles that use these roads.
- 6.45. One of the most significant elements of the proposals for Armada Way is the complete reimagining of green infrastructure in the city centre and how we manage, maintain and encourage it to flourish for long term environmental benefit. This is building upon best practice new tree and green space planting to ensure that the maximum benefits can be achieved, whilst balancing all the other objectives of the scheme in a holistic manner. This includes best practice in-ground rooting systems and the provision of the best possible conditions underground which will encourage them to thrive without detriment to other aspects of the city centre, benefitting from an advanced irrigation system to ensure they have sufficient water directly fed to their root systems. The Council is also introducing large areas of new reed-beds, which will not only cleanse and filter water, but also sequester carbon in a method never used in the city centre before.
- 6.46. Plymouth City Council has a good track record of establishing semi-mature trees in our city centre such that over the past 6 years we have established and nurtured 60 semi-mature trees of similar scale to those proposed in Armada Way, such as the New Coach Station, Market Way, and Millbay Boulevard.
- 6.47. The scheme proposes a total of 163 new semi-mature trees which when combined with the existing 39 trees to be retained will contribute to capturing carbon from our urban atmosphere typically locking in around 40 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year when mature. The trees will assist in the long-term moderation of the city centre microclimate, acting to reduce localised temperatures and offsetting the urban heat island effect. They will also offer usable areas of shade and intercept and store rainwater in heavy rainfall events through what will be a considerable extent of canopy area when established. The ambition of the scheme is to encourage the use of accessing and travelling about the city centre by more sustainable modes. With transport contributing 35% of the city's carbon emissions (Regen SW Nov 22) and the need for us to plan for Plymouth to achieve our reduction target by 2030, the city needs to act many times faster than outlined by government policies. For this reason, Armada Way will act as significant contributor to achieving these targets through promotion of safe walking and cycling routes, helping to encourage greater take up of these modes, and enhancing accessibility and connectivity between public transport opportunities.

### **Biodiversity and Nature**

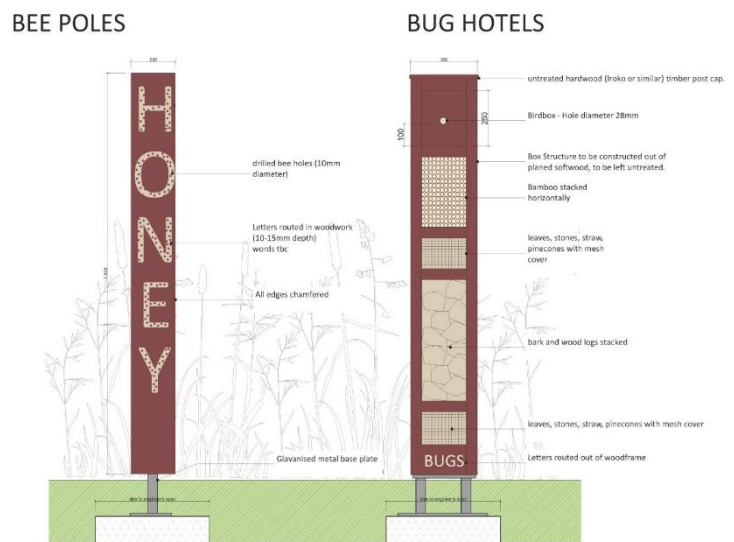
- 6.48. The final scheme provides for a half a kilometre long new urban linear park, which has the fundamentals of biodiversity and long-term greening of the city centre as a core principle. The plan includes not only for a total of 202 trees, with 39 of these being existing trees to be retained. The new trees are a diverse mix of species, with many of these offering significant benefits to pollinators and wildlife through flowering, or the production of nuts and berries for birds.
- 6.49. At ground level around the trees, there is proposed to be a significant amount of underplanting to contribute to the variety of planting and, through being floriferous, contributing significantly to the biodiversity of the corridor. New hedgerows marking the boundaries of the various spaces along Armada Way will also contribute to the extent of linear habitats in the scheme.
- 6.50. The scheme will include new habitats which have never existed historically in Armada Way which will also assist with enhancing the biodiversity of the corridor. This includes reedbeds and rain gardens which can be rich in invertebrates and water-based creatures. There are also large new

areas of wildflower planting included within the scheme which will substantially boost the number of insects and pollinators using the corridor.

6.51. The scheme includes provision for a large number of bird, bee and bat houses to be included within the green spaces. Some of these will be formed from the trunks of the previously felled trees and will take the form of 'bee totems' at multiple locations, aimed at attracting solitary bees. An example of the bee and bug totems is included adjacent.

6.52. As part of the biodiversity net gain which the Council has targeted for the scheme, an additional 525 small trees/whips will be planted. This will ensure that the Armada Way project, whilst providing long term environmental improvements and resilience to the corridor itself, will have wider biodiversity benefits through new planting across the city.

6.53. Some partners have commented positively on the nature-based elements of the scheme. A number of partners have commented positively on the plans for the use of green and blue infrastructure within Armada Way to achieve biodiversity and other benefits.



## Trees and Translocation

### Summary

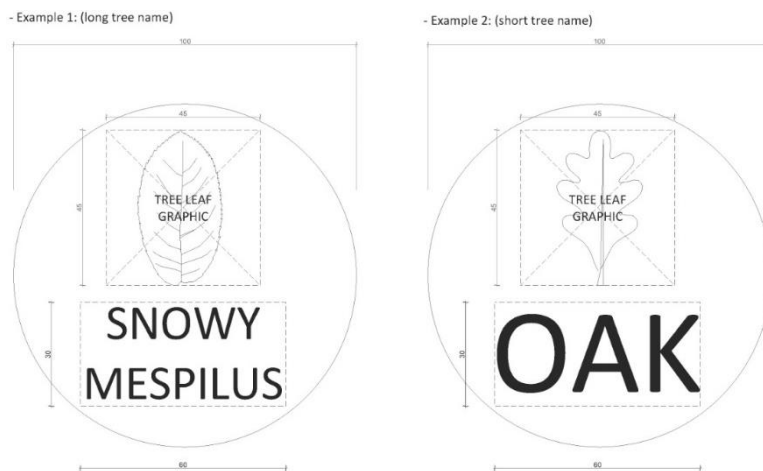
6.54. The planting of new trees which will thrive in a harsh urban environment has always been a fundamental objective of the Armada Way scheme. The new scheme includes a total of 202 trees within the Armada Way corridor, made up of 163 new, semi mature trees and a total of 39 retained trees. Following the consultation, the number of retained trees has increased by two trees to a total of 15 out of the 19 remaining trees. This has been achieved through adjustments made to the design to respond to feedback from various individuals and groups to reduce the risk of conflict between travel modes (i.e. walking and cycling) and through further consideration to land grading and levels. The two further trees proposed for retention are T007 – Cockspur Thorn adjacent to the Cophorne Hotel, and T0118 – Hybrid Whitebeam currently located within the Morgan Sindall compound area.

### New Trees

6.55. Detailed consideration has been given to each of the tree species proposed for Armada Way and their locations within the scheme. The trees are aligned within two distinct corridors of planting either side of the 12m wide central pedestrian, cycle and SuDS zone which will give the impression of the historical tree lined boulevard as originally envisaged for Armada Way. The arrangement of the trees within these zones, however, will be varied, and will consist of clusters of trees, in staggered or double staggered patterns to provide variety, interest and to help offset any wind-tunnel effects for the corridor.

6.56. The new trees have been chosen to be robust in a harsh city centre environment which is likely to experience issues associated with climate change more severely than other environments. They have also been chosen to reflect a good diversity of tree species, bringing biodiversity to Armada Way, and have been planted to reflect their preferred natural conditions, for example with planting of Alder close to water.

- 6.57. The trees are largely tighter canopy trees which, whilst providing a good volume of canopy cover as a result of their area covered by foliage, will also allow for the clear central view to be maintained as the trees grow. They will be sufficiently offset from the building line to avoid coming into close contact or colliding with the building facades as desired by businesses and business owners. The choice of trees with clear stems and raised canopies also allows for the desired views across and within Armada Way. Some trees do benefit from wider spreading canopies and have been selected following previous and the most recent consultation feedback. There are not any purely fastigate forms included in the new scheme. Evergreen trees have also been included within the mix of tree species to add year-round interest and greenery to Armada Way during the winter period.
- 6.58. Some planting has been used to create new and distinct areas of interest. This includes small clusters of Himalayan birch, as can be commonly seen effectively used in many urban planting schemes, as well as two rows of six topiary form London Planes which will in a relatively short period of time coalesce to form a continuous and extensive area of canopy cover under which people can sit out to protect themselves from both rain and sun. Other trees chosen to enhance and give identity to their surroundings are the proposed 12 Stone Pines to be located around the new Place de Brest space, and a Scots Pine located central to the 'mountain' play space within the plant village which will enhance the naturalistic theme of this area.
- 6.59. As well as being fed by the new SuDS network, some of the trees are located within planted beds and will benefit from extensive underplanting. This will help to reduce the rate of evaporation from the substrate they are planted into and help to shade the base of the tree.
- 6.60. The new trees will be planted within underground crated systems which have been proven to promote healthy root growth, and consequently healthy trees which flourish in the long term. Soil volume will be provided in line with Urban Tree Species Volume Guidance V2, with an average of around 17 cubic metres soil volume for each individual tree (except for clusters where many trees are planted close together) although some will be larger or smaller depending upon the species. This considerable underground volume which goes well above that of any trees than exist in Armada Way presently will allow for establishment of strong root systems which will deflect away from the undesired areas and not push up the footways or interfere with underground utilities and structures.



6.61. The trees have been selected to be semi-mature to provide immediate impact and benefits for Armada Way soon after planting. The trees will be sourced from UK based nurseries wherever possible, with some species potentially being imported depending on stock availability at the time of ordering. The heights of the trees are indicated on the table below. This information is based on the *absolute minimum height* of the tree on planting, although as has been the case with

the recent tree planting at New George Street, some trees are likely to come in taller.

- 6.62. Existing and new tree species will be accompanied at their base with a plaque outlining the leaf detail of the tree, along with their common and scientific names. Example of the design of these plaques is included above.
- 6.63. The table below shows the height and number of trees at planting, with the image beneath providing an indication of tree height in relation to a person.

Minimum height of trees on planting (metres and inches)	How many trees of this size will be planted
3-4m / 10ft	12
4m / 13ft	18
4.5m / 15ft	44
5m / 16.5ft	62
6.5m / 21.5ft	9
7m / 23ft	17
8m / 26ft	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>



6.64. The table below shows the estimated height of the new trees when they are fully grown and how many of this height tree there will be in Armada Way.

Estimated height of the new trees when they are fully grown (metres and inches)	How many of the new trees will be this height when fully grown?
4m / 13ft	12
7m / 23ft	8
8m / 26ft	6
9m / 30ft	44
10m / 33ft	13
12m / 40ft	23
14 / 46ft	8
15 / 50ft	23
16 / 52ft	24
18 / 59ft	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>

6.65. A diverse range of tree species have been proposed for the new planting scheme, and this has been increased following the consultation. These tree species will provide a great array of benefits to Armada Way. The scheme includes for a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees which will provide structural planting, interest and greening in the winter, with all trees contributing towards canopy cover and effective shade through a range of different canopy styles and forms. Many of the trees provide significant benefits to birds, insects and other wildlife, with others offering attributes such as edible leaves and fruit/nuts. The table below lists the species of trees proposed, the number of the respective trees and their benefits.

Tree Species	No.	Benefits
Lienco Field Maple <i>Acer campestre Lienco</i>	17	Tolerant of drought, compaction and air pollution. Good street-tree offers compact shade, autumn colour. Leaves are attractive to insects and bees and other pollinators visit the flowers.
London Plane <i>Platanus x hispanica</i>	1	Well used urban tree renown for absorption of small carbon particulates. Good for use in high streets, dealing well with issues of hardstanding and compaction.
Common Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	4	Native tree. Good for wildlife, with the cones providing an early source of food for birds, and catkins being beneficial to pollinators. Works well in SuDS.
Cut Leaved Alder Tree <i>Alnus glutinosa 'Imperialis'</i>	5	Pollution tolerant tree with striking appearance. Early cones are popular with birds with purple catkins being attractive to pollinators.
Snowy Mespilus 'Juneberry' <i>Amelanchier lamarckii</i>	6	High amenity value, with dark purple berries being attractive to birds and pollen/nectar rich flowers attracting pollinators. Spring flowering and autumn colour.
Kobus Magnolia <i>Magnolia Kobus</i>	10	Vigorous tree with beautiful and fragrant spring flowers. Great, narrow form street tree when planted in rows.
Red Maple <i>Acer Rubrum</i>	3	Excellent SuDS tree with vibrant colour in the spring and in the autumn. Attractive flowers before leaves unfurl. Leaves are attractive to insects and bees and other pollinators visit the flowers.
Himalayan Birch <i>Betula utilis jacquemontii</i> 'Doorenbos'	28	Neat habit, pollution tolerant avenue tree with brilliant winter interest through white decorative stem bark. Small flowers borne on spring catkins are attractive to bees and other pollinators.
Scots Pine <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	1	Native pine which is evergreen and able to survive and establish in difficult locations. Great for wildlife including insects, with seeds being attractive to birds.
Love Tree <i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	8	Beautiful tree full of pea-like flowers in Spring. Thrives in most soils and offers benefits to wildlife through the nectar and pollen rich flowers.
Cockspur Hawthorn <i>Crataegus crus-galli</i>	6	Good for urban and coastal areas. Tolerant of air pollution. Flowering tree good for wildlife.
Turkish Hazel <i>Corylus colurna</i>	10	Good pollution tolerant street tree. Tolerant of drought and waterlogging.
Maidenhair Tree <i>Ginkgo biloba 'Mayfield'</i>	10	Good, tough urban tree resistant to pollution, pests and disease. Evergreen with golden foliage in autumn.
London Plane (Topiary Roof Form) <i>Platanus x hispanica</i>	16	A good street tree with rapid growth but compact form. Great autumn colour and quickly establishes canopy cover.
Callery Pear <i>Pyrus calleryana Chanticleer</i>	6	Defined as the perfect street tree. Establishes well and thrives in harsh urban environments. Dense branch structure great for roosting birds with edible small fruits.
Double Crimson Hawthorn <i>Crataegus laevigata 'Pauls Scarlet'</i>	10	Resilient tree thriving in all locations. A tough reliable and highly ornamental tree with attractive flowers. Foliage and bright red haws are favoured by wildlife.
Silver Lime <i>Tilia tomentosa Brabant</i>	3	A perfect tree for planting in urban environments. Pollution tolerant with a compact shape and good colour.



New Horizon Elm <i>Ulmus New Horizon</i>	8	Dutch elm disease resistant with a rounded canopy. Fast growing and quick to establish. Suitable for use in SuDS.
Stone Pine <i>Pinus pinea</i>	12	Evergreen tree with umbrella or flat-topped canopy. Good evergreen, compact shaped tree for coastal areas
Cherry 'Sunset Boulevard' <i>Prunus Sunset Boulevard</i>	3	A narrow, upright form with a profusion of small white flowers attractive to pollinators in spring blossom. Vibrant red autumn colour.

- 6.66. A full plan showing the location of all proposed new trees is included at Appendix Q.
- 6.67. New trees have recently been planted in New George Street of a similar scale to many of those proposed for Armada Way and utilising a similar underground crating system assisted by rain gardens at their bases. The Armada Way scheme is covered by a contractual 5-year maintenance period built into the overall cost and should any trees fail within this critical establishment period, they will be replaced and replanted with a tree of the same size and stature.

### Retained Trees

- 6.68. A total of 39 existing trees are proposed to be retained in the final design of the scheme for Armada Way. This is an increase in two existing trees following a review of design and engineering options following the consultation, as explained elsewhere in this report.
- 6.69. A total of 16 Liquidambar trees situated within the piazza are being retained. These will have their planting conditions underground improved through breaking them out from their concrete collars which currently contain the roots, so as to provide more extensive root growth area. This will be supplemented by linear rain gardens around the base which will direct water flow from the hard surfaces of the piazza towards the trees. All of these design interventions will support healthier tree growth in the piazza.
- 6.70. Moving north along Armada Way, two existing Sorbus Trees (T121, T122) will be retained and integrated into the outdoor seating space. After a review of the hard surfaces network (following the consultation) a Hybrid Whitebeam (T118) can now be retained and integrated into an expanded green space. Further north along Armada Way, in the north-west corner of Place De Brest, an existing Single Leafed Ash (T109) will be retained and integrated into the hard landscaping of the Drakes Leat / chess table area. Crossing to the eastern side of Armada Way, a total of 11 trees are proposed to be retained. Three of these Horse Chestnut trees (T083, T084, T085) are located with the hardstanding of the flank footways and will be integrated into the play village. A further 8 trees (3 No. Common Laburnum T075-7, 2 Horse Chestnuts T79-T80, 1 No. Norway Maple T88, 1 No. Single Leafed Ash T081, 1 No. Flowering Cherry T082) are located within the existing raised planter and will be integrated into the toddlers play space area. In the far north of Armada Way, a total of seven trees will be retained either side of the Braille Garden / Amphitheatre space. This includes five Cockspur Thorn trees (T001, T002, T005-007) and two Wild Cherry trees (T003, T002).
- 6.71. A full plan showing the location of all existing trees is included at with the updated tree survey at Appendix F.

### Translocation

- 6.72. To facilitate the considerable benefits of the proposed scheme, including the SuDS network and its associated above and below ground extensive infrastructure (schematic plan included at Appendix M) and levelling work, the cycle way and the pedestrian footways, a total of four trees are required to be translocated from Armada Way. This number is reduced from the previous total of six trees which were consulted on, which has been achieved through considering opportunities for altering the design, in some cases quite considerably, to respond to comments

received during consultation. Through doing this, we have been able to retain an additional two trees.

- 6.73. Translocation is expensive with a risk of failure of the trees after being replanted and it is therefore something that the Council and its expert team have carefully considered in detail as to the impact on the overall plan and its objectives, alongside separate detailed assessments of each tree to be translocated. It has therefore been a process of careful balance, considering the positives and negatives of retaining the trees in situ.
- 6.74. Translocation involves the entire relocation of the tree, including the roots and the soil around it, and is carried out during the dormant period for trees which is typically between October and March. The tree and its root ball will be excavated and transported away from Armada Way, with the root ball being protected and taking particular care to not allow the roots to dry out or be damaged during transit and replanting.
- 6.75. In considering the best chance of survival for the tree being translocated, it should be planted in an open green space, surrounded by high quality soil to help the roots bed in. It is less stressful for a tree to be located in a naturalised environment as opposed to a hard urban situation. This is one of the reasons why it was considered more appropriate to translocate these trees off-site, combined with the requirement for guy ropes which can make the footprint of each tree very large and a hazard to pedestrians and cyclists.
- 6.76. The tree and root ball will be replanted in a pre-prepared tree pit in the new location to reduce the stress and period of time that the tree is out of the earth within the arboretum area of The Park, Plympton. The tree pit will be slightly larger than the size of the root ball, and the tree will be aligned to its original orientation and planted at the same depth from where it was previously, supported by compost and additives to help it establish. The suitability of soil will be checked, and samples analysed by a specialist for depth, structure, texture and nutrient content.
- 6.77. The tree will then be stabilised using a guying system and will be subject to an intensive care regime, which includes watering, weeding and other attention to ensure it has the best chance of survival in its new location. It is likely that in the proposed location, slow-release watering bags could also be used to limit the chance of dehydration. Following stabilisation, the tree pit and the surrounding area will be treated with a soil bacterial drench to improve the soil condition and its ecology.
- 6.78. This type of maintenance of new tree stock by expert horticulturalists will be undertaken at The Park in accordance with its planning permission, which offers a very good opportunity to extend the care regime to the translocated trees located in the same area. The stress of a tree can be observed immediately after translocation or gradually after a period of time. Proper aftercare improves survival rates, minimises further stress and ensures a higher success rate.
- 6.79. The Council recognises that translocation is a complicated process which is not an exact science as to how successful it will be and is determinant on a multitude of variables, some of which are unknown until excavation work is undertaken around each of the tree's root systems. The Council is, accordingly, committed to replanting a semi-mature tree for each of the translocated trees should they not survive. This will be within the city centre area to help enhance long-term canopy coverage.
- 6.80. A more detailed Translocation Assessment was undertaken by YGS Environmental Consultants in November 2023. This assessment sought to provide further evidence as to the best methodology for translocating the trees, and a review of their current condition. The four trees proposed for translocation, and the rationale for their translocation, are outlined below:



**T045 – Whitebeam**

Early Mature

Category BI (moderate quality).

Location: Western side of Morgan Sindall compound adjacent to Armada Centre.

Comment: The tree is generally in reasonable health and fair condition. Tree was previously surrounded by hard landscaping which has since been removed.

Rationale for translocation: Located at juncture of pedestrian footways, cycle lane, SuDS stream and extensive level changes.



**T119 - Japanese Maple**

Early mature

Category CI (low quality)

Location: At entrance to Knowledge Hub at southern edge of Morgan Sindall compound close to toilet area.

Comment: The tree is generally in good health and fair condition. The tree is growing in restricted root space close to hard landscape.

Rationale for translocation: Located directly in centre of axial pedestrian and cycle route. Directly within the alignment of the central SuDS stream.



**T120 - Japanese Maple**

Early mature

Category CI (low quality)

Location: (right in photo) At entrance to Knowledge Hub at southern edge of Morgan Sindall compound close to toilet area.

Comment: The tree is generally in good health and fair condition. The tree is growing in restricted root space close to hard landscape.

Rationale for translocation: Located directly in centre of axial pedestrian and cycle route. Directly within the alignment of the central SuDS stream.



**T125 – Silver Maple**

Semi mature

Category CI (low quality)

Location: Western footway of Armada Way adjacent to former Poundworld building.

Comment: This tree is in reasonable health but particularly poor structural condition. It is a managed pollard in the hard landscape. There is a significant wound at the top of the stem following previous limb failure. Adjacent trees have recently been removed, leaving this tree exposed and at greater risk to branch loss. The pollard management regime will need to be maintained in any event.

Rationale for translocation: Located within rain gardens and alignment of underground infrastructure.

- 6.81. YGS' assessment outlined that there are two possible options for translocation of a tree, either (1) a mechanical tree spade mounted on the rear of a vehicle or (2) an air spade and tracked excavator.
- 6.82. With a mechanical tree spade, the operation involves removing a plug of soil from the translocation tree area for reuse. This is then followed by the tree spade being positioned around the tree, with hydraulic blades cutting out a 2m wide plug containing the root-ball. The roots beyond this area are severed as a result, and the tree is then transplanted to a prepared pit with its own soil and a mixture of compost and fertiliser.
- 6.83. For translocation using the air spade method, this is undertaken through exposing the roots of the tree, which are then cleanly cut creating the root-ball for translocation. Trenches are opened at 3-5 stem diameters and all woody roots found are pruned to define the extent of the root ball. Radial trenches towards the tree will then be opened and the root ball undercut, whilst retaining as much soil and fine root material as possible. A framework will be secured as necessary to assist the lift. The root ball can then be wrapped with hessian and lifted with the excavator and translocated to a pre-dug tree pit. The same procedures apply as with the mechanical method including the use of guy ropes to secure the tree and appropriate aftercare.
- 6.84. In both instances, some enabling works also need to be carried out before translocation of any trees, including the removal of all barriers such as planters, bollards, from the existing and proposed translocation sites.
- 6.85. Given the conditions that the four trees are currently planted within, the exact translocation methodology is likely to vary for each tree and will be dependent on the findings of ground investigations. Following a more detailed review of the trees and their settings, it is recommended by YGS that the trees are mostly translocated using the air spade and tracked excavator methodology. This will therefore, subject to further new information on the underground conditions, likely be the method used.

### **Council's Plans for Trees**

- 6.86. The Council's Plan for Trees is focused around ensuring the right tree is in the right place, the correct management of trees, the correct infrastructure of trees and the appropriate aftercare to guarantee as best as possible that it will establish and grow well. These are guiding principles for all the new trees and their planting conditions proposed for the scheme.
- 6.87. Both the existing retained trees and the proposed new trees will benefit from having large underground areas based around a proven crated system and access to water and nutrients from the SuDS network to enable them to thrive. Historically, trees have been planted in post-war rubble, brick, cement and underground slabs which have restricted their growth. This was clear during excavation work which showed that one tree was planted in just 300mm of poor soil, with another having its roots spreading out over manhole covers which could not be removed. Numerous trees were removed prior to March 2023 due to either having died off or become a hazard. The new scheme will seek to address these issues through ensuring that the trees are properly planted in line with the Council's Plan for Trees so they can flourish and be healthy in our city centre environment.
- 6.88. Appropriate 5-year planned maintenance embedded with the cost of the scheme as part of the on-going, long-term maintenance of Armada Way aligns with the management and delivery principles of the Plan for Trees. Our teams will work with the maintenance contractors to develop a robust maintenance regime during this initial 5-year period which would include specific training in relation to the management of the new trees.
- 6.89. The Council has planted a significant number of new trees across the city in the past two years as part of its Planting Programme. This has resulted in 11,966 trees being planted in the city. This year (2023/2024) the Council will be delivering 18 tree planting schemes with communities. These

are funded predominantly funded through the Trees for Climate Fund. We are expected to plant a further 3,500 trees across these various schemes in the coming months.

## Play Infrastructure

- 6.90. A significant area of the new scheme has been designated as a Play Village. Play space is something which has never featured prolifically in the city centre and was largely focused on a set of wooden animals in New George Street, some distance from Armada Way. The provision of a new, large play village will act as a catalyst to bring people to Armada Way, increasing dwell time and encouraging activity throughout the day. It will also play an important role in creating a city centre which is fully aligned with the ambition for delivering significant numbers of new residential accommodation in the surrounding area.
- 6.91. The play village will be one of the UK's largest city centre play spaces, equivalent to the size of five tennis courts and will offer a huge selection and variety of play experiences. The play village has been designed to be accessible to everybody, including children with mobility impairments and includes sensory areas specifically aimed at being a quieter experience for neuro-divergent children.
- 6.92. The play village is something supported and applauded by businesses and Plymouth City Centre Company who stated that they "especially welcome the plans for the Play Village which will go a long way in encouraging families back into the city centre".



- 6.93. The play village will accommodate children and young people of all ages. Starting in the far north will be a toddlers' play area, with equipment including a throne ring, 'village' with huts and various swings, stepping logs and other pieces of play equipment. This area will also include play equipment which is accessible to children with disabilities or impairments. The toddler play space is the only area proposed within the play village which is fenced and gated off, softened by hedges and planting, to stop younger children leaving the area. Seating will be integrated into the edges abutting the existing raised planter area, which will allow for parents to sit and watch their children playing. The amount of seating in the area has been reviewed and added to following the consultation.
- 6.94. Adjacent to the south is the beach and mountain themed spaces, which include a large play 'galleon', swings, climbing ropes and bucket swings. This is bounded to the south by the mountain

play space which consists of a number of flat rock plateaus stacked atop each other, featuring a slide and water play set within it. This area is partly open to the central pedestrian path, but the majority is segregated by a row of soft landscaping and will include seating for parents to use whilst watching children play.

- 6.95. Continuing south is the water play and Drake's Leat area which will offer exciting experiences for children to engage with water either through the arrays of dancing jets or through the rill inset into the ground which features a series of dams, weirs and water wheels to control and play with the water. The dancing jets will operate during the day on a rotation pattern of various effects, and at night will bubble gently with some up-lit illumination. This can be changed so that during evening events in the summer, for example, the jets can operate at full height with illumination. This will be a significant attractor of families with children to the city centre and achieve our ambition of making Armada Way a space used by all at all hours of the day. The filter and pumping mechanism for these systems, along with those controlling the SuDS will be located in the subterranean toilets in a currently vacant room. This area will also pick up upon the theme of Drake's Leat, which runs beneath and crosses Armada Way at this location. This helps to add a historical reference to the post-war city centre and will be subtly demarcated by insets within the granite surfacing following the alignment of the leat.
- 6.96. Within the Drake's Leat area on the opposite side of the central axial route, and therefore separate from the play village itself will be chess tables and associated seating. These have been relocated from the original Braille Garden area at the top of Armada Way and will provide the opportunity for contemplation over a game of chess, or for use as a table for lunch. A total of four chess tables will be located within the new 'chess square' feature.



- 6.97. Moving south just before Place de Brest will be the woodland play space. This will include a large set of treehouses, connected by aerial walkways and climbing nets and slides, somersault bar and firefighter's poles. This area has been designed to weave amongst the new trees being planted, so that as they mature there will be a sense of being up amongst the trees. Seating is also provided on the edges of this space so that parents can keep an eye on children.
- 6.98. The final defined play area is set away from the noisier play and is located on the southern side of Place de Brest. This will include more gentle, sensory based play equipment to appeal to children who are neuro-divergent or those who prefer quieter play. It will include features such as sculptured grass plateaus and sandpits and audio sensory equipment such as tubular chimes, whistling stone windpipes and impact spheres. Again, seating will be located around the edges of this space for the enjoyment of parents.

- 6.99. The play village has been designed in collaboration between the project design team, PCC internal play experts, and the product manufacturers. This has ensured that what is being proposed will not only be usable and desired but will be manageable and maintainable for the Council. All new equipment will be subject to warranty should any items or parts of equipment fail. Most pieces will be off-the-shelf and therefore easily replaceable following this period. The arrangement of the play village has also been discussed in regard to cleansing and maintenance, with paths between the spaces accessible by street sweeper and ease of movement around and between equipment considered.
- 6.100. The play village has been designed to be located away from the cycle track to avoid the risk of children running out in front of cyclists, and this is located on the opposite side of the 2.5m wide axial footpath and the 2.5m wide SuDS stream. Issues were raised regarding the potential for antisocial behaviour in the area at night. The play village will be well illuminated as a result of the new street lighting columns being installed and will also benefit from additional ornamental lighting to trees, dancing jets and other instances. This will ensure that it is not a dark area at night. It will also be clearly observable by CCTV as a result of the upgrading to the cameras and the clear sight lines towards the space. Evidence has shown that if a play space is robust, open and well-lit that it can attract teenagers to use the space into the evening without causing issues of antisocial behaviour, and this is an approach which will be advocated. The Council will also be continuing discussions with the Police Designing Out Crime Officer and Make Space for Girls who will be able to contribute and inform the final arrangement of the space.

### Public Realm Infrastructure



- 6.101. The need to enhance the city centres public realm to create a more attractive, dynamic, usable and accessible public realm is clear. The Armada Way scheme addresses the issues which it has faced historically and, together with the other Better Places schemes, will signal the rebirth of the city centre as an exciting and safe place to visit. Armada Way is just one, albeit large, piece of the jigsaw aimed at reimagining the city centre. It will act as a significant piece of enabling infrastructure for the future, which will set the standard for how city centre spaces can be truly mixed use in future.
- 6.102. Whilst many detailed points relating to specifics of the scheme are addressed within this report, there are important areas to note in relation to the provision of this piece of public realm

infrastructure and how it has been designed to be as accessible as possible for all users and offers spaces for all to enjoy in various ways.

- 6.103. One significant issue to be addressed through the redevelopment of Armada Way is the level and condition of the footways. The new scheme seeks to address these issues, which are not only unsightly through a range of mis-matched materials and repairs being undertaken over time but are also creating a risk to users and a liability for the Council in terms of claims for trips and falls.
- 6.104. Consideration of the pedestrian environment has been paramount in the design, and this involves some significant regrading of the land to adjust levels to create safe and level walking environments for pedestrians. In addition to this, regrading has to take place in order for the SuDS network to operate, given that it is reliant on crossfalls to drain towards the rain gardens and rill. The footways will be surfaced using high quality granite with good slip resistance and will be a combination of light and dark grey, with an increased amount of buff coloured paving to provide highlight to focal spaces such as multi-use areas, play and performance spaces. The scheme will also address the prolonged issue of broken granite pavements within the Piazza and removing and relaying granite in a new pattern but also using smaller paving slab sizes to reduce the risk of damage when used by heavy event vehicles.
- 6.105. Wide footways of around 6 metres in width will be provided alongside the existing building lines which will allow for clear pedestrian movement as well as safe access and egress for emergency vehicles given that these are red routes. The only area where footway width is reduced quite substantially is the area of the existing trees and raised planter to be retained on the eastern flank footway close to the new play village.
- 6.106. Armada Way was previously very limited in terms of accessibility to spaces as a result of the 1980's hard and soft landscaping arrangement and multiple changes of level across short distances which made access for mobility impaired individuals to many areas quite difficult. In the steepest section of Armada Way north of Mayflower Street, releveling work will be undertaken to create a series of 'parterres' or plateaus. These spaces will be at ground level on the northern edges, rising to around 1m at the southern end as the gradient decreases. There will also be steps on the southern ends to allow access and egress to the spaces so that they do not become dead ends. These spaces will be an exciting addition to the public realm and will create usable, level areas for use by the community.
- 6.107. An extensive amount of new seating will be provided within the scheme. Originally there was proposed to be in the region of 500 seating spaces available of different types, and this has been increased following consultation specifically to ensure that there is enough seating space around the children's play village. The type of seating has been carefully assessed and will include a combination of seating with backs and armrests, and others being bench tops. Space has also been made adjacent to some benches for a wheelchair. Seating is located at regular intervals along Armada Way, including the south facing edges of the plateaus to make best use of this aspect. Other informal seating will be included such as the amphitheatre space which will allow for a large number of people to sit in one space to enjoy performance or take in the vista towards the Hoe.
- 6.108. For Armada Way to be both clean and functional, a new approach is required to be taken towards bins. The final scheme will include bins at regular intervals along Armada Way and will be designed to form a single 'palette' so that there is not a mis-matched arrangement across the new public realm areas. On-going discussions between the design team and Street Services and Waste are being undertaken as to the capacity and aesthetics of the bins; however, they will mark an improvement from the existing bins which are overly large, intrusive and sometimes difficult or unpleasant to use.
- 6.109. Following the consultation, the Council will be reviewing opportunities for installation of a drinking water filling station on Armada Way. At this point the location and details of the filling station are subject to detailed design; however, it is likely that a minimum of one station will be located either within or immediately adjacent to the play village. The Council will also install a minimum of one defibrillator on Armada Way at a nodal point or centre of activity on the proposed scheme.



- 6.110. As part of the project, the Council will also look to enhance the existing facades of the toilet buildings and structures located close to the sundial. This will make both the above and below facilities more attractive for use by visitors to Armada Way.

### Economy and Business

- 6.111. As has been made clear in the earlier sections of this report, the city centre is changing, and the Council has a responsibility to ensure that it continues to grow and thrive into the future. One of the fundamental objectives of the Armada Way scheme is to enhance the attractiveness of the city centre, and Armada Way particularly in this instance, for new and existing businesses. The final scheme as proposed will introduce an entirely new and high-quality public realm, replacing old and outdated hard landscaping and inaccessible public realm, with a vibrant, dynamic and modern space which will signify a huge vote of confidence in the future ambition and vision for the city centre.



- 6.112. The Council recognise that there is strong demand for the scheme from the business community, land and property owners on Armada Way and from investors who are interested in Plymouth's ambitions for good economic growth. This scheme sends a signal of the Council's commitment to the rejuvenation of the city centre and of confidence in our future as a modern city to invest and do business in. This is a view which has been expressed by both the Plymouth and Devon Chamber of Commerce, the South-West Business Council, Theatre Royal, British Land and the Plymouth City Centre Company. Other organisations such as Food Plymouth also recognise the importance of the scheme, stating that: *"The city is changing, and it is important to future-proof it in the face of challenges like climate change and changing shopping habits. Mixed use city centre is inevitable as retail patterns are changing dramatically which has a more promising outcome as this keeps the city alive in the evenings with potentially more eateries/restaurants in and around Armada Way. Mixed use has been found to reduce unwelcome anti-social behaviour and security is increased as businesses and residents act as security 'eyes' during daytime, evenings and nighttime through this 'natural surveillance'."*

- 6.113. The plan includes significant enhancements to the experience of visiting Armada Way, including new wide and clutter free footways which allow for clear visibility towards building facades and shop fronts as well as cross-views over Armada Way from one side to another. The final scheme

also includes a whole range of level multi-use and pop-up spaces at multiple locations which can be used by the community or businesses for different events. Large and improved outdoor seating spaces have been provided to allow for businesses selling food and beverages to put out tables and chairs and encourage more of a café and outdoor dining culture along Armada Way. These spaces will be well illuminated, extending their use into the evening, and will benefit from areas of usable shade from the numerous trees which are proposed to flank the seating areas.

- 6.114. The scheme will provide a whole range of spaces and opportunities for people to stop and rest whilst visiting the city centre, including over 500 seating spaces with a range of different arrangements to suit all users. The Council wants to encourage not only more people to visit Armada Way and the city centre more generally but enhance dwell time which will benefit local businesses. This will increase local spend and encourage new businesses to stay open later, as well as new businesses to open up in the area. The importance of good lighting, CCTV, and the new play village cannot be overstated in helping to meet this ambition.
- 6.115. The Council have listened to the City Centre Company and cultural organisations who state that they would like to make better use of the city centre spaces in a regenerated Armada Way. As part of the refurbishment of the original 1950's Braille Garden, we will be integrating a new stepped amphitheatre space which can be used for smaller scale performances. The Theatre Royal and Plymouth Culture are keen to enliven these spaces, and the Council will work with these organisations and the City Centre Company to ensure this happens not only at the new performance space, but also in the other multi-use spaces. This is a prime opportunity to bring action and energy to the whole of Armada Way, not just focusing on the existing piazza and New George Street area, but to push this focus of activity northward.
- 6.116. A new central area of focus will be Place de Brest, which will be enhanced for events through the provision of four new solar canopies, which will help give purpose to the space and allow for covered seating. This will help to increase dwell time in the area, whilst providing cover for events, concessions and people wanting to sit and watch a performance in the space.
- 6.117. In responding to the scheme during consultation, British Land stated that *“British Land believe that the newly transformed Armada Way will help to unlock future investment in the city centre.”* whilst the City Centre Company also stated that *“... the City Centre Company and city centre businesses have been asking for the reinvigoration of Armada Way for some time and we are delighted with the scale and ambition of the new plans. We fully endorse the vision to Recapture the scale and grandeur of Armada Way, and we applaud the decision to recreate the original Abercrombie vision of a tree-lined boulevard from North Cross to The Hoe. It is just what the city centre and our businesses need as a catalyst for regeneration and will be fundamental in unlocking further investment, which is so desperately needed, given the changing nature of the high street. We believe this scheme will enable the council and partners, including the Plymouth City Centre Company, to create a more diverse city centre with less dependence on retail and provision for more housing, leisure, and year-round cultural and arts events in a spectacular setting.”*
- 6.118. Upon approval of the final scheme, the project team will work with the Council's Economic Development department to assess the short, medium and long term economic benefits that will be brought to the city from the Armada Way scheme, how these can be secured and realised, and any further opportunities that exist to contribute to economic growth and supporting new and existing businesses.

## Safety and Security



- 6.119. Ensuring that the new Armada Way is a safe and secure space has been an overarching objective considered at all stages of the design process, responding directly to the issue of the previous space being dark, unwelcoming and with limited surveillance by CCTV. This is exceptionally important for encouraging evening activity and residential development into the city centre and responds directly to other Council initiatives such as enhancing safety for women and girls. Critical to the creation of a safe space is ensuring clear lines of sight across the Armada Way corridor at all times, and removing opportunities for concealed areas which was a particular issue of the previous 1980's landscape design, through opening up the space.
- 6.120. The arrangement of the significant areas of new planting has been considered, with new trees in the scheme having been specifically chosen to have clear stems with raised canopies to allow for the clear views from one side of the space to the other. Underplanting has also been carefully considered to ensure that it does not form an impediment to sight lines. All of the new raised 'parterre' spaces that exist in the areas of Armada Way with the steepest gradients have been designed to be accessible at ground level, with alternative exit routes out onto the flank footways to avoid the creation of dead ends and areas of concealment. Other multi-use spaces and play spaces along Armada Way are open from two or more sides to allow for clear views through the space and for ease of access, movement and circulation. The exception is the existing raised planter close to Mayflower Street which has been retained due to the large remaining trees; however, this space has been sensitively designed to accommodate part of the children's play space and does not create areas of concealment.
- 6.121. Of significance to creating an environment where pedestrians feel safe into the evening is the provision of appropriate lighting. Whereas Armada Way previously relied upon building mounted lighting which only illuminated the footways directly beneath them, which was severely hampered by the over-mature canopy cover, the new scheme will include a large number of 12m-15m tall light columns along the flank edges. The new lighting will accord with the British Standard for lighting in public realm amenity areas and will include three lamp heads with LED lights which will direct light downwards but also spread illumination more widely at pedestrian level. The new lighting scheme has been modelled and shows a compliant level of lux across the entire corridor, a significant betterment over the previous arrangement.
- 6.122. Beyond the street lighting, Armada Way will be illuminated by a number of ornamental lighting effects which will add interest and further enhance the sense of safety in the corridor. This will

include uplighting to some trees, illumination to the SuDS rill and GOBO lighting which will be added to brackets mounted on some of the higher mast lighting columns, projecting patterns onto the ground. All of these individual elements will create a well-lit space which adds interest and encourages use into the evening.

- 6.123. To be considered alongside enhancements to lighting is enhanced CCTV coverage. This was an issue of real concern previously in Armada Way, with CCTV sightlines heavily impeded by the canopy of previous trees, resulting in a large sections being without any adequate surveillance. Enhancing CCTV coverage has been a key theme in the consultation, and this will be addressed in the new scheme through inclusion of more than four new CCTV cameras which will enhance long-range CCTV views along Armada Way and in some instances, other streets. This will ensure that there is appropriate coverage along the corridor, supporting the objectives of creating a safe and secure space and deterring anti-social behaviour, theft and other issues.
- 6.124. Some key aspects of the scheme have also been created to discourage antisocial behaviour as best as possible. An example is the play village, which has been designed to be as open as possible, whilst providing the necessary safety for young children, supported by appropriate formal surveillance and lighting into the evening. Indeed, recent research suggests that, contrary to the perception of antisocial behaviour and vandalism in children's play parks, a city centre play space which enables effective use into the evening through good surveillance, lighting and activities to bring people to the area and dwell longer into the evening, actively discourages misuse of the play space by teenagers. The Council will work with Make Space for Girls and the Police Designing Out Crime Officer to consider more detailed aspects of the play village designs to ensure that it caters for as many groups as possible.
- 6.125. Through these interventions and improving the perception of safety in hours of darkness, the Armada Way scheme will bring more footfall into the evening. By encouraging people to dwell and use the space in a way which was never possible previously, the Council are hopeful that new development and businesses will open, and existing businesses stay open longer, along the corridor. This will further activate the use of the space into the evening and increase the level of informal surveillance, all of which will enable an exciting and safe city centre public realm.

## 7. SUMMARY OF BETTER PLACES CONSULTATION SINCE 2018



7.1. Launched in 2018, the Better Places programme of city centre public realm works was aimed at addressing the issues resulting from years of underinvestment in city centre streets and spaces, with the ambition of turning around the look and feel of the city centre. The initiative's overarching aims were to support and catalyse new future investment into the city centre and to create a more robust,

mixed-use environment with considerable amounts of new residential development in this most sustainable location. Better Places also sought to encourage new retail, leisure and non-retail employment in the city centre, build stronger civic pride and challenge perceptions of the city centre and what it should be in a modern Plymouth.

7.2. The programme of public realm works, of which Armada Way is the largest and most ambitious, falls within the Better Places Programme. The City Council made provision for £27 million of its own funding as part of a wider package estimated at £49 million at its meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017. It is intended that the scheme will be funded from a combination of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) and various City Council budgets.



7.3. There are two other major public realm projects in the city centre contained within the Better Places framework. The Civic Square, completed in January 2024, focused on restoring the listed park and garden and introducing a new cycle lane and widening pedestrian footways in partnership with Historic England. Old Town and New George Street, which replaced the entire public realm of this pedestrianised street, introducing new granite surfacing, lighting, a substantial SuDS network, new tree planting and

greening, had experienced some considerable delays but is shortly due to complete Phase I between the Sundial and the service yard access at Tesco. The new public realm sets the Council's ambition for the level of quality we desire for our public realm and has been well received by businesses and the public. The following phases round to the entrance to Old Town Street at St Andrew's Cross are due to be completed and released by October 2024.

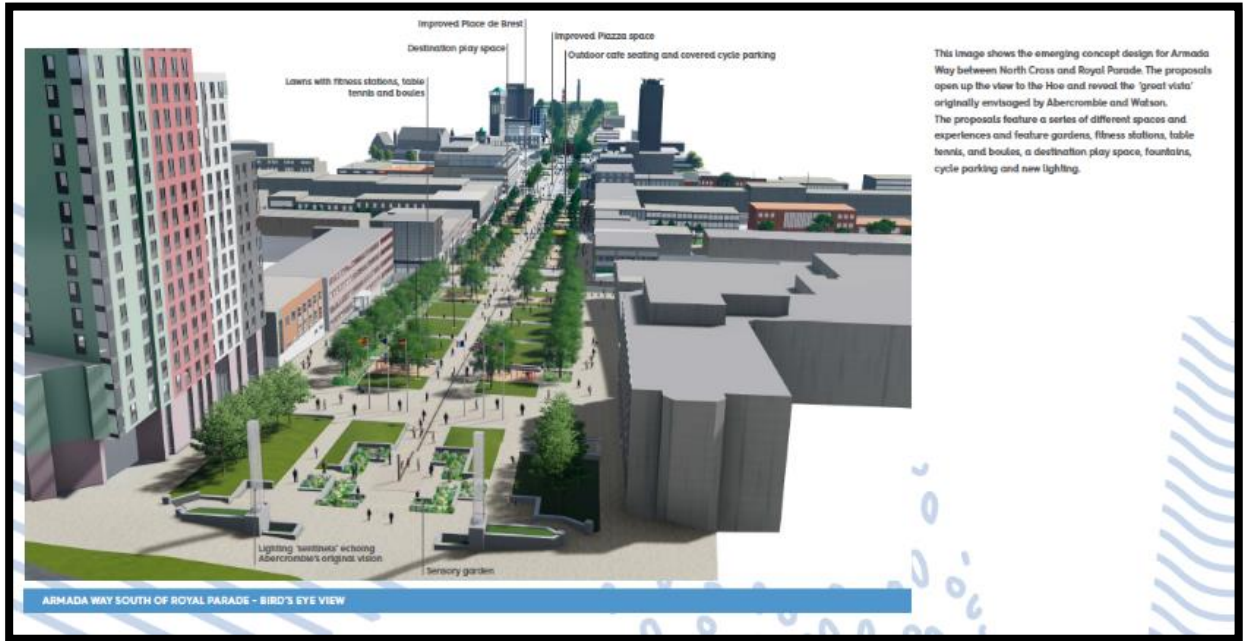
7.4. The Better Places programme, dating back as far as the bidding process in 2017, has transcended numerous political administrations. LDA, the original scheme designers, undertook an extensive programme of engagement with Councillors and relevant stakeholders on the lead up to, and during the Better Places consultation in 2018.

7.5. As outlined earlier, Armada Way is the single largest and most transformational project within the Better Places programme and will act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the city centre. Armada Way has been designed to represent a considerable raising of the bar in quality to enhance the experience of visiting the city centre and was the key focal point of new activities and events in new spaces to make the best of the opportunities the space presented. The scheme was to connect Plymouth's best assets, kick-start a new mixed-use offering for the city centre including residential along its flanks, and encourage more activity and introduce play to an area where it currently does not exist. Of importance all along, in common with the other Better Places schemes, would be the delivery of a new, extensive SuDS system with new trees and planting. The issues of clutter in the public realm, and of conflict between pedestrians and cyclists would be addressed, and barriers to movement to those with mobility impairments removed.

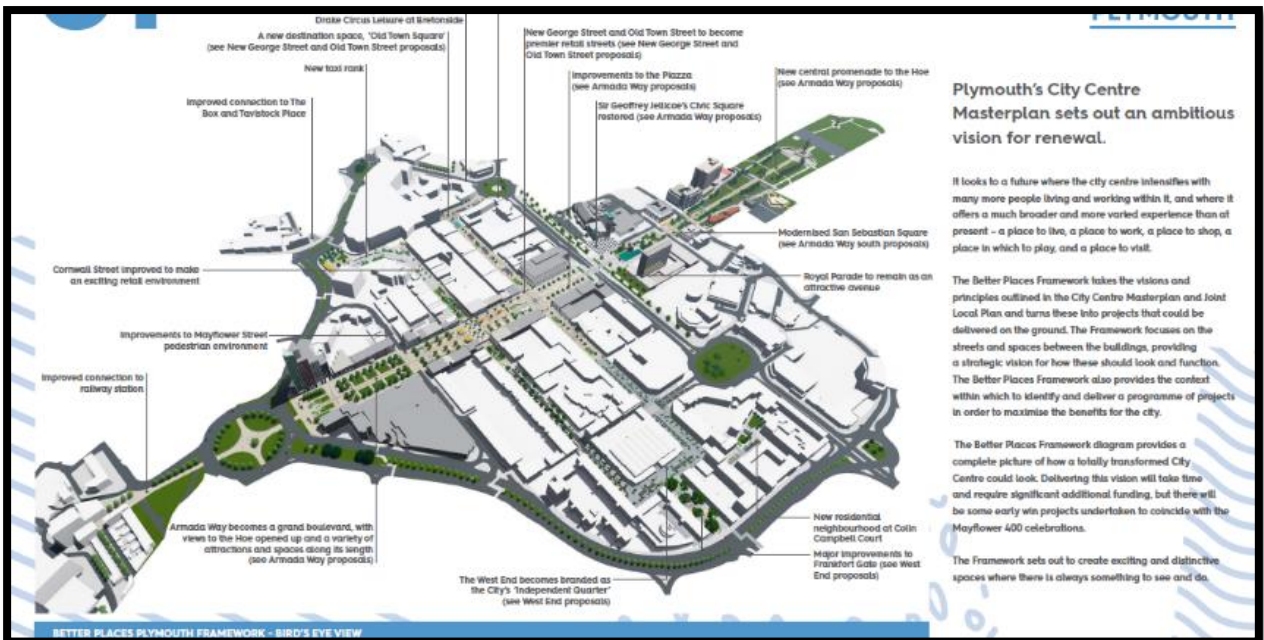
**Better Places Consultation: 2018**

- 7.6. Between 15th March 2018 – 26th April 2018 a large-scale, city-wide consultation was held on the Better Places projects where the public, visitors, stakeholders and interested parties were invited to attend a series of events providing more information about the proposals. The 19-day consultation took place at a range of locations across the city including the city centre where a special pop-up shop was opened, local neighbourhood centres, libraries and supermarkets.
- 7.7. The events were heavily advertised across social media channels and on the Council website. Articles were also run in local press with information about the consultation and encouraging people to feedback on the plans. A number of stakeholder workshops were undertaken, and attended by a diverse range of stakeholders, interested groups, and individuals. The workshops included Historic Environment Workshop, Health & Accessibility Workshop, Access, Events Infrastructure and Emergency Planning workshops.
- 7.8. The events across the city were well attended, and a total of 178 formal responses were received, 86% of which was from people residing within Plymouth.
- 7.9. Specifically relating to Armada Way, Question 12 of the Consultation form asked respondents to give views on the ideas proposed. Of those indicating a preference of an option (109) 92 people (84%) indicated their support for the then proposals, of which 12 respondents had some reservations about specific elements of the scheme then proposed, and 16% (17) were not supportive of the proposals. It was noted that there was support for opening up the historical vista of Armada Way and the sweeping route south to the Hoe. It was also noted that there were some concerns raised around loss of mature trees, with representatives also stating that they would wish to see a mixed variety of species in the tree lined boulevard as opposed to single species. There was also comment that the Oak on Citadel Road could be felled, with subsequent planting elsewhere to mitigate, to release the view to the Naval Memorial more fully. It was recognised in the comments that cycle lanes were needed to avoid pedestrian conflict.
- 7.10. The three images included below show the visual information presented during the 2018 consultation relevant to the Armada Way project.

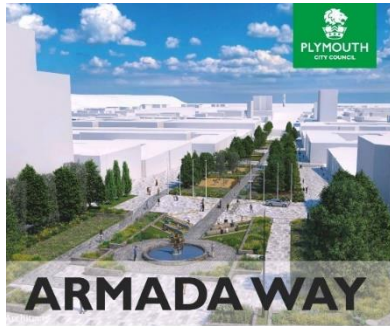




This image shows the emerging concept design for Armada Way between North Cross and Royal Parade. The proposals open up the view to the Hoe and reveal the 'great vista' originally envisaged by Abercrombie and Wilson. The proposals feature a series of different spaces and experiences and feature gardens, fitness stations, table tennis, and boules, a destination play space, fountains, cycle parking and new lighting.



## Armada Way Public Information Event: 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022



Thursday 29 September 2022 - 12noon until 6pm  
Third floor, Drake Circus

Plymouth City Council is inviting residents to an information event to see the latest proposals for the regeneration of Armada Way. The ambition is for a remastered Armada Way as a new linear park, restoring its original design intent as a grand boulevard leading to the waterfront, while offering an exciting and engaging space fit for a modern city centre.

Council officers along with the design team for the project will be on hand to discuss the proposal and answer any queries.

The £12.7 million investment project, aiming for completion in Spring next year is funded through the Government's Transforming Cities Fund and matched by Plymouth City Council.

7.11. Leading on from the commissioning of a new design team and the completion of extensive design work responding directly to feedback received during the earlier consultation and requests of the then administration, an information event was held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022 from 1200-1800 in Drake Circus. The event aimed to provide an update to the public and businesses on the progress of the plans and the updated, greener, more biodiverse and more sustainable design following earlier feedback.

7.12. The event was advertised on all social media platforms, PCC website, BBC Spotlight and radio stations, and on posters distributed around the city centre and public buildings.

7.13. A display setting out the modified plan with 3D CGI images and explanatory boards focusing on issues such as tree removal and replanting, the proposed SuDS and the new general arrangement plan were presented.

7.14. The information event was attended by approximately 200 members of the public, including local business owners, who had the opportunity to discuss the plans with the scheme designers and council officers. 17 formal comments were received, with 75% of comments being supportive of the scheme. One comment referred to the loss of mature trees and advocated for keeping and maintaining some of the “elderly and not dying trees”.

## Meaningful Engagement Event February 2023



7.15. Following the resolution at its meeting of the 30 January 2023, the Council undertook a meaningful community engagement event in February 2023. The event included an intensive period of engagement with the public, as agreed by with the Portfolio Holder at the time, opposition groups and ward members. This ran for a six-day period between Monday 6<sup>th</sup> until Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February, including evenings on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of February.

7.16. The engagement included an event at the Guildhall for the public to attend, see the information concerning the schemes, ask questions of the professionals and officers

present and feedback comments in person. Further engagement activities were undertaken including dedicated workshops with groups and organisations. An online option for completion of the engagement survey was also available. To promote the event, information was included in the Council's resident newsletter to 26,252 people, and a period of social media advertising started from 4 February reaching 38,000 Plymouth residents.

7.17. The Council received a total of 2274 responses made either in-person at the Guildhall events (349) or via our online portal (1925).

7.18. A range of feedback with some detailed suggestions and comments were received following the engagement event. Some common themes for improvements to the scheme detail included:

- retaining all or most of the existing trees,
- enhanced lighting,
- sufficient supportive seating including covered seating,
- improved and/or more CCTV coverage,
- enhanced colour to reduce the extent of grey paving,



- adaption to the cycle line and cycle provision,
- more habitats for wildlife,
- adaption and consideration to different types of play and active features,
- ongoing maintenance and management,
- and other comments, including new toilet provision.

## 8. SUMMARY OF THE “LETS TALK ARMADA WAY” CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

8.1. In May 2023 a new administration took control of the City Council and the previous decision relating to a scheme at Armada Way was withdrawn. At the start of summer 2023, the Council commissioned independent consultation and engagement experts, Engage Communicate Facilitate (ECF) to undertake an extensive period of stakeholder consultation on the new design. The overarching aim of the consultation programme was to gain a deeper understanding of the aspirations of residents, businesses, visitors, and other stakeholders regarding Armada Way. Through understanding this, the Council wants to be able to ensure a scheme is delivered that meets the long term needs of people who work, live, shop, eat, play, and travel through the space.



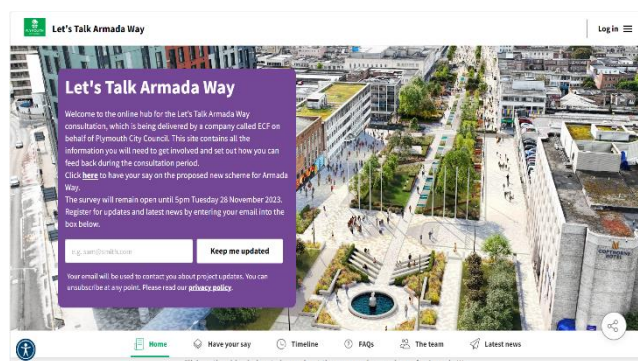
8.2. The objective of the consultation was to ensure that the voices of Plymouth residents, businesses, visitors and other stakeholders who use Armada Way were truly heard and represented, ensuring that persons and groups with a stake in the new scheme had a mechanism to feedback in a variety of ways. The consultation also wanted to ensure that the voices of previously under-represented groups such as families with young children and young people were heard, and their views fed into developing the proposals through an open dialogue.

8.3. Crucial to the consultation was to ensure that all relevant stakeholders were identified in line with the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The consultation also needed to meet the requirements outlined in the Plymouth and South West Devon Statement of Community Involvement (2020) and accord with the “Gunning Principles” of consultation.

8.4. To ensure a robust approach to the consultation, ECF undertook a period of familiarisation with past consultations with the project team. This enabled ECF to map an approach to the six-week long consultation. Detailed stakeholder mapping was undertaken which included all residents and businesses that visit or work in the city centre, schools and playgroups, groups that represent people with disabilities and elderly people, representatives of national, regional and statutory bodies, local groups and organisations, environmental groups and organisations and cycling groups.

8.5. A brand, “Let’s Talk Armada Way”, was created and used as a central theme for all the consultation activity. A website was created

(<https://letstalkarmadaway.commonplace.is/>) which provided all consultation information including plans and technical information. The web site also acted as the online location for submitting consultation feedback electronically by way of a survey which requested views on the elements of the



scheme being consulted on. FAQs were also provided which were regularly updated according to feedback received during the engagement activities, and weekly videos on different “themes” relating to the new scheme were added for viewing by visitors to the site. There were 24,066 visitors to the website.

8.6. The consultation was launched at 8am on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 and ran until 5pm Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. The launch was accompanied by high intensity canvassing of the city centre, along with emailing of a digital information pack to high priority stakeholders. In addition, around 250 stakeholder contacts were emailed upon the launch of the consultation, with



a link to the website and how to get involved – which included groups that represent various equality categories, and emailed 1,200 people who had subscribed to the website. Postcards and posters were handed out along Armada Way and members of the team and the City Centre Company met with businesses to discuss the consultation arrangements. Large scale vinyls were wrapped around the solid hoarding at the site compounds, with more added in the following days at the hoardings north of Mayflower Street. Information boards were set up at the Central

Library alongside a 'ballot box' for completed physical forms, and other information boards were installed at the Theatre Royal foyer and in Plymouth Market. Postcards and posters were also distributed in the post and provided to other popular destinations in the city including The Box. An email address was also set up so that the consultation team could be contacted directly by those who had queries or could not make an in-person event. This was monitored across the consultation period and responses provided. If this required input from members of the project team on technical matters, this was also provided. When questions of a common theme were received, the website FAQs were updated and those who had signed up for updates were alerted to these updates being published. This included, for example, uploading of a detailed report on tree translocation on 15<sup>th</sup> November. A consultation telephone service was also set up so that those who are not digitally savvy could respond by telephone as well as hard copy.

- 8.7. Distribution of postcards along Armada Way and inviting people to complete the consultation electronically on iPad continued throughout the consultation period. A total of around 15,000 postcards were distributed during the six-week period. Postcards were also distributed to residential areas immediately surrounding the city centre area, including the Hoe, Stonehouse and Devonport areas. Engagement was undertaken in other high footfall areas in the city centre including Drakes Circus over two days. ECF representatives also distributed postcards and posters outside of local primary schools, events at the Guildhall, and to numerous community hubs and youth centres across the city. Postcards were also distributed by the ECF team to the public at two of the city's highest footfall events, the City Centre Light Switch-On and the Barbican Lights Switch On.



- 8.8. ECF facilitated a number of meetings with Councillors representing the main political groups across the city which were also attended by officers. These included Labour, Conservative, Green and Independent groups. Two discussion forums with Luke Pollard MP were also facilitated.

- 8.9. A number of meetings and discussions were held with various special interest groups across the consultation period. This included Salutem care and disability group, Plymouth Area Disability Action Network (PADAN), an Older People's Group, Vision Group with Sensory Solutions, Young People's Group and Family Groups through Barnardos. Schools across the city

were also contacted for the via email with a link to how to get involved and, where requested, postcards were sent to them, this was to ensure that parents and school staff could have their say. A meeting was also facilitated with Make Space for Girls, a group which campaigns for better and safer public realm for women and girls. Engagement was also undertaken with Plymouth Culture, who actively promoted the facilitated workshops to the community in order to ensure that the voices of many people involved or interested in Plymouth's cultural community was heard.

- 8.10. Towards the end of the consultation period, following the release of all additional FAQ material and arising from initial contact made at the start of the process, a number of interviews were

undertaken with priority stakeholders. This included groups such as Plymouth Cycling Campaign, STRAW, Plymouth Tree People, Environment Plymouth, Theatre Royal, and the City Centre Company. Formal written responses were also received from a number of organisations and groups.

### Summary of Reach

- 8.11. By the end of the six-week engagement period, a total of 1503 survey responses were received. Full detail of the demographic breakdown is included at the ECF Final Report at Appendix D; however, a summary has been included below outlining the main breakdowns.
- 8.12. Of the 1501 respondents who responded to the postcode question, a total of 96.4% had a PL postcode, with 3.5% from other postcodes including the wider Devon area with 1.2% with TQ and 0.6% EX postcodes. 260 (17.3%) of respondents were from PL1 postcodes, with 257 (17.1%) from PL3 and 226 (15.0%) from PL4 postcodes.
- 8.13. A wide range of age groups responded to the engagement which was enhanced by youth engagement activities. Of the 1480 respondents, the largest number of respondents were aged between 65-74 years old (21%) and 55-64 years old (19%).
- 8.14. The majority of the 1472 respondents to the question on sex were female with 776 (53%). 598 (41%) were male, with 98 (7%) preferring not to say.
- 8.15. On the question of gender identity, the majority of the 1409 who responded (96.5%) had the same gender assigned to them at birth, with 2.2% using the text box to describe their identity. 0.9% preferred not to say, with 0.4% stating they had a different gender to that assigned at birth.
- 8.16. The majority of respondents to the question of disability (71%) stated they did not have a disability that affected their day-to-day activities, with 16% stating they were 'limited a little', 6% stating they were 'limited a lot', and 6% preferring not to say.
- 8.17. A total of 1463 respondents answered the question on race, with the 1281 (87.6%) identifying as White. This was followed by 108 (7.4%) preferring to say and 35 (2.4%) using the text box to describe their ethnicity. Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups, Asian or Asian British, and Black, Black British, Caribbean or African represented 1.4%, 0.7% and 0.5% respectively.
- 8.18. Of the 1503 respondents, 1475 (98%) responded on behalf of 'myself, as an individual' with a total of 28 responses received on behalf of an organisation, representing a range of groups, businesses and university.
- 8.19. On the question of how the respondent is connected with Armada Way, a total of 1499 responded with the highest proportion being those that do not live near to Armada Way but live in Plymouth and/or visit Armada Way (904). 860 respondents stated that they frequently shop at or visit Armada Way, with 308 stating they live near to Armada Way and 215 working on or near Armada Way.
- 8.20. A total of 1498 respondents answered the question on how they travel to Armada Way. The majority of respondents stated that they walked, drove a private car, or caught a bus to Armada way. 219 respondents were passengers in a private car, with 185 cycling and 59 travelling by train.
- 8.21. On the question of the number of children living in the household, most respondents (75%) stated they did not have any children in their household, with 12.2% having one child, 10.5% having two children and 1.7% having three children in the household.

## 9. CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUES SET OUT IN “LET’S TALK ARMADA WAY”

- 9.1. The independent ECF report which sets out in detail the results of the consultation and engagement exercise undertaken in Autumn 2023 is reproduced in full as Appendix D. In Section 5 of the report the main findings are set out. The conclusions have been drawn from the responses to the survey, written responses, interviews, and workshops. The report identifies 12 thematic areas in relation to the comments made and a total of 40 headline conclusions.
- 9.2. The Armada Way Project Team have considered all of the responses made during the consultation and engagement exercise and reviewed the ECF report in detail. In addition, all of the detailed organisational responses have been considered in detail. The Armada Way Project Team have reflected on the comments received and where changes can be made to the design, whilst being in line with the scheme's overarching priorities, these have now been incorporated in the final design set out in Appendix L.
- 9.3. Raw data from the survey can be found here: <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/armada-way-results>

### General Overview

- 9.4. The response to the consultation and engagement exercise undertaken by independent experts has generally been positive overall towards the scheme but a number of detailed points have been raised, which have been given further consideration, some of which have resulted in changes to the final scheme design. 926 respondents out of 1,456 opted the scheme would make the city centre more welcoming, 871 opted that it would make it a greener place, 748 opted that the scheme will help businesses attract more customers and 698 opted that it would attract more families to come to Armada Way. The scheme has been generally supported by Plymouth Civic Society, and there has been strong support for it expressed by the City Centre Company, South West Water, the Environment Agency, British Land and Plymouth Community Homes. However, it is important to note that there were concerns raised about a number of areas – including the proposal to translocate 6 trees, the route of the cycling scheme and the ongoing maintenance of the site once redeveloped. For each of the 11 thematic areas raised, the response of the Armada Way Project Team is set out below.

### I. Nature and Greenery

- *When asked what respondents felt was most important when making Armada Way a greener and more sustainable urban environment, the most prolific choices were that: they want Armada Way to be a green space with trees, shrubs and wildflowers; be climate resilient; and deal with the city centre’s rainwater smartly. These were followed by respondents opting to keep as many existing trees as possible, and those who chose the ‘other’ option stated that they wanted all existing trees to be retained in the scheme to give canopy cover to provide shade and protection from the sun.*
- 9.5. Response: One of the fundamental design objectives of the scheme has been to create a green space with the right trees and planting in the right places, whilst providing a modern public realm space of quality to help transform the city centre, both in the short and long-term. Having increased green space, with trees, shrubs and other planting, will not only improve climate resilience, but will also provide canopy through existing mature and newly planted semi-mature trees. People had the option of selecting what was most important to them, in terms of nature and greenery. If no option was suitable from the list, they also had the opportunity to add their own. The most commonly selected statement was that people want Armada Way to be a green space, with trees, shrubs and wildflowers (871 people), followed by the statement that they would like it to be climate resilient (462 people). When asked for further comments about nature and

greenery, 152 respondents highlighted nature and greenery as much needed, with 106 respondents emphasising the significance of trees for shade and protection. These were the most prevalent themes when people were asked for any other comments relating to nature and greenery in the survey. Food Plymouth and Plymouth Tree People made a number of very detailed observations regarding the planting, some of which have been incorporated in the final scheme design. The scheme design makes provision for dealing with water smartly as both South West Water and the Environment Agency have confirmed, both of whom support the delivery of the scheme. The response to those respondents who wanted to retain all the existing trees in situ is set out immediately below.

- *When asked what respondents felt about the proposed translocation of six trees to enable the development of the cycle route and SuDS, it was balanced between those who preferred to keep all existing trees and were worried about the success rate of survival, with those who were happy for the trees to be removed if necessary for the work to go ahead and there were some who felt it was unnecessary as it would be a 'waste of money'.*

9.6. Response: A specific question was asked regarding the translocation of the trees, because we recognised that it would be an issue that would be of high public interest. The recognition in the representations of the appropriateness of translocating some trees if necessary to achieve other design objectives and to deliver the wider benefits of the Armada Way scheme itself is welcomed. There were 386 comments stating they did not want the trees to be removed. 184 comments were concerned about tree survival, and 532 respondents supported the translocation in principle if needed, whilst others expressed more specific comments on viability, price and SuDS. Environment Plymouth, 'STRAW', Plymouth Tree People, the Plymouth Cycling Campaign and the Hoe Neighbourhood Forum questioned the need for translocation. Particular concerns raised include: questioning the justification of the tree removal, likely survival of the trees, maintenance of the trees translocated, reduction of canopy cover, loss of mature trees, The Woodland Trust said that they welcome the Council's commitment to retaining trees, and understand the justification for their removal, but requested that further design work is undertaken to avoid translocation and retain more trees. In light of differing opinions on this matter from the representations received, a further review has been undertaken of the 6 trees proposed for translocation. Having again assessed each individual tree, it is now considered, in light of other design changes to reflect comments made during the consultation and engagement exercise, that two of these trees can now also be incorporated into the final design. These are T007 (Cockspur Thorn) and T118 (Hybrid Whitebeam). It has been concluded that the 4 other trees (T045 - Whitebeam, T119 – Japanese Maple, T120 – Japanese Maple, T125 – Silver Maple) cannot be retained in their existing position because they compromise to an unacceptable extent other design objectives of the scheme, most notably the delivery of the SuDS and the cycle route. This means that the final design now only proposes to translocate four trees. This means that of the 19 original trees (having excluded the tree that was recently removed as it had died), 15 have now been incorporated into the proposed final design for the Armada Way Scheme. When asked what is important when making Armada Way a greener and more sustainable urban environment, 476 responses highlighted that making the scheme climate resilient is important. In relation to climate resilience issues, as the Armada Way Climate Impact Assessment demonstrates (See Appendix C), the design performs very well in relation to addressing climate resilience issues.

- *Respondents also stated that if trees had to be moved, it needed to be done carefully in conjunction with experts and a maintenance plan to ensure their survival. Some suggested that if the trees did not survive translocation, then other mature trees should be planted in their place.*

9.7. Response: This point is accepted. It has always been the case that translocation of the existing trees carries risks, but provision has been made in the budget to enable a careful translocation of

4 trees, with provisional sums for aftercare and maintenance. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that all the trees survive this process, if any of the trees do not survive translocation, there is a commitment to replace them with a semi-mature tree should they die within 5 years of being translocated. Should this occur, priority will be given to the replacement trees being planted in the city centre to increase canopy cover.

- *Written responses from some groups felt that the translocation was not necessary as the cycle path could be routed around the trees and there wasn't sufficient evidence presented that the trees needed to move to enable the SuDS. Requests were made that a full technical plan for the SuDS should be published to justify the removal of the trees. It was also stated that a previous pledge to keep all trees as translocation was not viable, was being renegeed.*

9.8. Response: This is not accepted. The provision of the cycle path has to meet the design standards of a Department of Transport document called LTN 1/20. While there are various design solutions for providing a cycle path in complex city centre locations, evidence produced during the consultation clearly showed the impact each tree had on both the cycle route and SUDs (Appendix M). Detailed technical drawings for the drainage system will be produced for the construction phase as would normally be expected. Statements made by Councillor Tudor Evans OBE on numerous occasions confirmed a commitment that no further trees will be felled: no commitment was given that trees would not be translocated if that was necessary in order to achieve other scheme objectives.

- *However, other written responses and representatives from interviews stated that they were happy for the trees to be translocated, as it is essential the SuDS is implemented to effectively manage the city's rainwater and prevent potential flooding incidents.*

9.9. Response: The support and recognition of the inter-play between the different design considerations and therefore the necessity for some translocations is welcomed. Following consideration of the consultation feedback, the design has been amended which has enabled two of the trees originally proposed for translocation to be incorporated into the scheme, including removal of east-west footways and level adjustments. The other four trees still need to be translocated in order to achieve the other overarching benefits of the scheme. For these to be retained, would cause a considerable impact on the delivery of the scheme. The two trees are T007 and T118. Specifically, the Environment Agency and South West Water praised the proposal for a SuDs scheme, which would relieve pressure on the combined sewer system (see section on Environmental Sustainability in the report for further information).

- *It was also requested that as part of any construction work around the SuDS, a plan should be put into place to deal with the rodent population living in the current underground tanks.*

9.10. Response: This matter has already been raised in earlier consultations and taken up with the Environmental and Public Protection Service. During construction, arrangements will be made with the service to monitor the position regarding any rodents and appropriate action will be taken if necessary.

- *Further themes regarding nature and greenery included: that tree canopy is much needed (especially from mature and tall trees) in an urban environment to provide shade from the sun and protection from the rain; that suitable planting for pollinators and edible plants for wildlife should be considered (with specific suggestions by Food Plymouth in their written response); that some of the tree species suggested were not suitable with specific mention of the 'Tree of Heaven' (with other suggestions from Plymouth Tree People); and that thought was needed to reduce the amount of hard/grey space.*

9.11. Response: It is considered the overall composition of the design and its approach to nature and greenery has been to improve canopy cover with a good amount of that new planting to encourage pollinators. The existing proposed tree schedule contains a number of tree species which contain edible berries, nuts and leaves. Food Plymouth suggested that there were opportunities for fruiting trees and other edible planting. Whilst it is not considered that the city centre is the best location for edible plants and fruits (due to wider maintenance issues and vermin) some of the suggestions regarding tree species selection can be accommodated in the final design. The emerging Plymouth Plan for Nature Recovery will set out a wider ambition to support community orchards and places for edible food production across the whole city, on more appropriate land, developing these opportunities directly with community groups. Environment Plymouth and Plymouth Tree People objected to the inclusion of the 'Tree of Heaven'. The final scheme design now replaces the originally proposed new 'Tree of Heaven', designed to reflect the existing retained 'Tree of Heaven', with a London Plane tree. This is reflected in the final design of the scheme at Appendix L. Food Plymouth made a number of detailed suggestions regarding tree species selection, linked to climate resilience and future exposure to disease. The views expressed regarding suggested changes to the tree species in the scheme have also been considered and changes made to the final tree planting schedule are shown in the final scheme design. With regard to the comments concerning the balance between hard and soft landscaping it is proposed to make some adjustments to the design so that the accessible green space in the new scheme is increased to 21%. This is above what was consulted upon. Because the scheme is trying to deliver multiple objectives and it is considered that with the further changes proposed, the overall balance is now appropriate between hard and soft landscaping.

- *The suggestion of underplanting to increase biodiversity net gain was made along with the consideration of tree species selection (using as many native species as possible), irrigation plans and soil specifications. Greater clarity around the biodiversity net gain calculations was also requested.*

9.12. Response: These points are accepted. The intention behind the proposed under-planting was always to maximise biodiversity and support pollinators, in a way that was realistic and affordable from a maintenance perspective. A detailed planting schedule will set out the proposed under-planting and these comments will be taken into account in finalising that. Whilst biodiversity net gain calculations have been undertaken on previous scheme designs, this has hitherto been against the backdrop of continuing delays from government on the precise implementation date for these provisions in the Environment Act 2023 and, moreover, the absence of the final guidance on the methodology to be used in these calculations – which were only published on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023. A biodiversity net gain calculation will now be undertaken on the final scheme design using the government's required methodology and will be published when complete.

- *Continued funding and planning for the long-term maintenance of the trees and planting was also a key theme, with many people questioning how that would be achieved and what provisions the Council will make.*

9.13. Response: This point is accepted, and provision has been made in the scheme budget for 5 years of future maintenance, alongside other arrangements in relation to other maintenance issues raised during the consultation and engagement exercise. This will be reviewed and monitored.

- *The proposed micro-forest near to the Crowne Plaza was also questioned, with more detail required and objections to it being mentioned as part of the Armada Way proposal.*

9.14. Response: Environment Plymouth, 'STRAW', Plymouth Tree People and the Hoe Neighbourhood Forum raised concerns regarding the proposed planting near the Crowne Plaza hotel. It was made clear during the consultation and engagement exercise that the proposal for the area near the



Crowne Plaza was not part of the Armada Way scheme, but indicative of further plans to increase canopy cover nearby in the city centre. Should this proposal proceed, it will be the subject of a separate consultation and engagement process.

- *As a lot of detailed suggestions and feedback regarding nature and greenery were issued through the written responses to the consultation, it is highly recommended that these are reviewed by the Council in full.*

9.15. Response: Most of these points are accepted. A number of helpful and detailed comments and suggestions have been made which have been reviewed, some of which have been included in the final scheme design. For example, reference has been made to “10-20-30” rule Santamour, F. (2002) which stipulates that planting should be in accordance with 10% of one species, 20% of one genus, and 30% of one family of trees. This is to provide ensure the tree population remains sufficiently diverse in the wake of invasive pests and diseases. The final tree planting schedule has been updated to address this concern.

## 2. Play Village

- *When asked what their interest in a play village would be, most respondents stated that they're not interested in it and wouldn't use it. However, it should be noted that most of those respondents were either older people and/or don't have young children in their households. Those that would use it were mainly parents of young children or grandparents. It should also be noted that those responses in the survey and written responses that represent the business community, were supportive of a play village as it was felt it would attract more families into the city centre.*

9.16. Response: The support from families, the City Centre Company and local city centre businesses for the play area and its ability to attract additional footfall is welcomed. Whilst 75% (682) of respondents were not interested in the play area, and would not use it, these were from people who did not have children. 219 respondents were parents and 217 grandparents who would use it. It remains the case that the play area is a central part of the new Armada Way design which will attract footfall to the city centre. It is also considered that in light of the ambitions to attract investment to the city centre, particularly new housing, the provision of an adequate play area is strategically important for the longer term as the city centre is transformed into a place where more people live and work.

- *Those who wanted a play village felt it would encourage them to use the city centre more, would be a place to rest whilst their children were entertained and would therefore increase dwell time, which was also the hope of those representing the business community.*

9.17. Response: The support expressed for the play village is welcomed and will support extended dwell times (244 of respondents) which will benefit the economy of the city centre and therefore city centre businesses. Of the 662 respondents commenting on what they liked most about the proposed play village, 111 were generally supportive of the plans, whilst 81 didn't like the plans. Overall, it is considered the play village should be retained in the scheme as proposed, but further, more detailed consideration will be given to the precise specifications for the play equipment and new seating locations to respond to the detailed points made.

- *When asked what the important elements of play are, the most common were that: there should be plenty of suitable seating near to the equipment; that it should cater to a diverse range of abilities; it*

*should use as many natural materials as possible; and have clear visibility so that parents could watch their children play. It was suggested by some stakeholders that the Council consult with 'Make Space for Girls' when designing the equipment as girls play in a different way to boys (it should be noted that feedback was requested from this group as part of the consultation, but they sought payment in return). Many also stated that it is essential that the full range of needs for those with physical and mental disabilities are considered throughout the play village, not just in the sensory garden.*

9.18. Response: These points are welcomed and will be taken into account in relation to the detailed specifications for the play equipment for the play area. Maintenance of the play park (68 respondents) and robustness of materials (57 respondents) were the top concerns raised which will be addressed through the new governance arrangements for city centre maintenance and in the detailed specification for the play equipment. 'Make Space for Girls' have been approached to provide input into the detailed design of the play equipment. The needs of children and young people with physical and mental impairments have been considered as part of the design process and has included several discussions and consultations with PADAN. In finalising the detailed specifications for the play equipment, the needs of neuro-divergent children and young people with impairments will be taken into account. The play village itself has been designed to be accessible and will include specific equipment that will be suitable for a range of children and young people with physical and mental impairments. Opportunities for more seating adjacent to the play area have been considered and additional seating areas added.

- *Suitable equipment for all ages was also mentioned, including teenagers (through the written responses) and it was asked what provision was being made to provide appropriate places for young people to 'hang out'.*

9.19. Response: The play village has been designed to support young people and children of a range of ages, so no further design changes are considered necessary in response to this point. There are also other opportunities and areas for young people to socialise in the new and varied public realm spaces.

- *There were concerns regarding the size of the play village with it potentially being too large to maintain and intrusive for those who wouldn't use it.*

9.20. Response: Only 24 respondents out of 662 said that the play village was too large, with Environment Plymouth, 'STRAW' and the Hoe Neighbourhood Forum, all stating it was too big. It is not accepted that the play village is too large for a city the size of Plymouth and will, because of the range of equipment it will contain, offer something of interest to the existing population of the city. The play village will encourage additional footfall into the city centre from people around the city. There is also no other children's play space within the city centre area. In addition, and consistent with the commitments in the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan, specifically the strategic outcome for the city centre, Strategic Objective SO3, and the overall policy for the city centre set out in Policy PLY06, substantial new housing is planned for the future. Accordingly, over the medium and long-term, there is a need for the play village to be of a size that will reflect the anticipated future population of the city centre.

- *Dealing effectively with antisocial behaviour was also mentioned, as there were concerns the sheltered spaces would be used inappropriately and no-one would be responsible for deterring those activities and clearing up after them. In the written responses it was mentioned that appropriate lighting and angled CCTV would be essential to monitor the play village, especially at night. Having suitable public toilets with easy access and changing areas was also mentioned.*

9.21. Response: It is well-documented that one of the issues with the original Armada Way layout was that in places it allowed for antisocial behaviour to take place, much of it out of the sight lines of the existing city centre CCTV cameras. The project will see a number of city centre CCTV cameras upgraded, which together with increased pedestrian footfall will improve overall formal and informal surveillance along the whole of the Armada Way scheme. Detailed discussions have continued with the Police Designing Out Crime Officer who, having reviewed the scheme, is supportive of the project, subject to some detailed design observations. In relation to lighting this has to be designed to meet the requirements of British Standard BS 5489-1 whilst taking into account guidance on reducing the impact of lighting on nature. Overall, the new arrangement will be a significant improvement on the current lighting of Armada Way. There will be some external improvements to the existing Armada Way toilets but their enhancement, refurbishment and upgrading will be a separate project to be developed once funding becomes available.

### 3. Pop-Up Spaces

- *Live music, creative performances, pop-up stalls and food outlets, plus an extension to Flavour Fest were all seen as good uses for the proposed pop-up spaces. It was asked that high quality traders should be encouraged when it comes to food and drink, whilst ensuring that the local favourites would still be able to secure a place. More frequent events including theatre performances were also encouraged, in addition to craft stalls and street performance.*

9.22. Response: The pop-up spaces have been generally supported and have been designed to be as flexible as possible. Most of the points raised are supported, and will be subject to future management arrangements, working in conjunction with the City Centre Company.

- *The written response from the creative sector should be viewed as it sets out detailed suggestions to ensure the logistical factors are considered such as: power in the right places; appropriate lighting; and the ability to quickly erect and secure temporary canopies to shade from the sun or shelter from the rain. It also suggests that an implementation group should be formed with representatives to ensure the pop-ups spaces will meet the needs of event coordinators and those putting on cultural activities.*

9.23. Response: The detailed response from Plymouth Culture has been fully considered and no specific changes to the final design are considered necessary; although issues such as power supply, shading and appropriate lighting have been considered as part of the final scheme design. It is intended that there will be an on-going dialogue with Plymouth Culture as the future managerial arrangements for the pop-up spaces will be developed in partnership with the City Centre Company.

- *Including street art installations and heritage aspects was also suggested, with clarity requested on how these would be incorporated into the scheme.*

9.24. Response: The heritage considerations of the scheme e.g. restoring the Phoenix Fountain and Braille Garden were set out as part of the expected benefits of the scheme and no further changes to the design are considered necessary to respond to this. In relation to street art installations, the scheme as designed is sufficiently flexible to accommodate future art installations, so again no further design changes are considered necessary. The City Council and the City Centre Company will continue to work closely with trusted partners such as Plymouth Culture to explore further opportunities for cultural interventions.

- *There were also questions asked as to whether skateboarding and parkour users would be considered, as they are frequent users of the city centre and therefore seating, low walls, the amphitheatre etc should all be tailored to withstand that activity and be designed with that usage in mind.*

9.25. Response: The issue of skateboarding and parkour users have been considered at every stage of the evolution of the Armada Way design, within the context that there is an existing byelaw. The final design will incorporate seats with bench components, indentations and clips on both informal and formal seating areas to avoid damage.

#### **4. Solar Canopies**

- *Most would like to see the solar canopies being used for sheltered seating, followed by space for pop-up stalls and bike racks. It was also mentioned in some comments that they could provide important canopies from the sun and rain. Support of sustainable measures such as solar canopies was welcomed by some stakeholders.*

9.26. Response: Support for the inclusion of the solar canopies in the final design is welcomed. These will in themselves provide additional shaded areas and they will facilitate future outdoor seating. In relation to seating, 1,326 respondents supported sheltered seating which has been incorporated into the final design for this area. In relation to the issue of further bike racks and cycle parking, 672 respondents highlighted the solar canopy area as an opportunity for this. An allowance has been made in the final scheme design to introduce further facilities at the proposed mobility hub, near the solar canopies and at other locations throughout the scheme.

#### **5. Flexible Spaces**

- *When asked how they would use the flexible spaces, most stated they would sit and relax, eat, drink and socialise. Using the spaces to add more greenery through lawns, planting or trees was also suggested.*

9.27. Response: The representations regarding how the flexible spaces would be used reinforce the importance of this being included within the overall design concept. Regarding the balance of greenery to hard landscaping, provision has been made elsewhere in the scheme for lawned spaces, and it is therefore considered that the balance is appropriate between hard and soft spaces.

#### **6. Seating**

- *Most would like to see seating throughout the scheme, whilst also ensuring sheltered seating, seating with tables, disability access and seating in the play area are considered. Seats with high backs and arms rests was also an important factor. There were also comments that asked for more bench space/informal/natural seating (e.g. benching near Guildhall, like the promenade in Penzance, and The Strand in London). In the written responses, it was requested that the 'flag blocks' on the sundial be retained as part of the scheme as they are frequently used as seats by locals.*

9.28. Response: 1,178 respondents indicated that the most important consideration for them was that there were seated areas throughout the scheme. The scheme that was the subject of the consultation and engagement exercise contained an estimated 500 plus areas for seating. The final

scheme design will facilitate opportunities for further outdoor seating. The scheme already includes seats with high backs and arm rests. The final scheme design will explore opportunities for further seating adjacent to the play village. In relation to the 'flag blocks' on the sundial, the plans showed that the intention was to tidy up the area around the sundial, modernise surfacing and look at general refurbishment works. It is our intention to tidy up the area around the Sundial and look at general refurbishment works. There was never any intention to remove the seats with flags and these are an integral part of the Sundial design.

## 7. Cycle Path and Mobility Hub

- *When it comes to the cycle path, out of the choices given, most respondents said that they regularly walk along Armada Way and so would value a path that would be specifically for cyclists and some said that it would encourage them to use their bikes more. A lot of respondents also stated that they wouldn't use a cycle path.*

9.29. Response: The support for the provision of a dedicated cycle path for cyclists is welcomed. 754 respondents who used Armada Way for walking, supported cyclists having their own path, which was the top response. However, there were 124 comments indicating that cyclists and pedestrians should not mix, with 94 comments saying cycling is unsafe for pedestrians. Only 70 comments were raised against the cycle path. In light of the comments received, careful consideration will be given to signage and delineation of the cycle path, but subject to the changes proposed to the east-west routes, the cycle route has been retained in the final scheme design.

- *Those that are cyclists or represent them were concerned about the path due to a number of factors: its width as it was felt that there would be insufficient passing space; safety factors where it crosses the pedestrian paths; the need for clear waymarking and education of its use; being misused by e-bike riders and especially delivery riders that cycle at speed; unclear sightlines around planting; the shape of bends as they may not be suitable for other bike types such as recumbents; and unclear rights of way or how to merge at points where it intersects with other streets.*

9.30. Response: The design of the cycle path has to meet the guidance set out in the Department for Transport LTN 1/20. The scheme that was the subject of the consultation and engagement exercise was independently verified as meeting these requirements, including by Active Travel England. Nevertheless, in light of the observations made regarding various detailed aspects of the design of the cycle route and its inter-relationship with the areas for pedestrians, various changes have been made to the final scheme design to address these concerns raised by the Plymouth Cycling Campaign, the Hoe Neighbourhood Forum and others. Firstly, the two east-west pedestrian routes have been removed at the point of interaction with the diagonal sections of cycleway, reducing the opportunity for pedestrian/cyclist conflicts. This change will also enable further benefits to be achieved in terms of retained trees and more public realm/accessible green space. Secondly, the delineation of the cycle path is to be made much more pronounced with the use of pink granite for the cycle path itself. Thirdly, further work will be undertaken in consultation with Sustrans on the specific way marking totems and floor scape signage to better emphasise the cycle route. Lastly, the final design will incorporate cycle racks which will be incorporated into various parts of the scheme. These changes will still enable compliance with LTN 1/20 but will address some of the concerns raised during the consultation and engagement exercise.

- *Ensuring that sufficient bike storage would be available throughout the scheme rather than being all in one place and that it would be made from durable materials was also mentioned.*

9.31. Response: This point is accepted, and the final scheme design will incorporate cycle racks in various parts of the scheme.

- *The written responses section contains detailed feedback regarding the proposed cycle path and mobility hub and should therefore be reviewed by the Council.*

9.32. Response: The detailed comments have been reviewed and the above changes address the main concerns raised. What is not supported, as some have suggested, is a straight cycle lane on one side or other of Armada Way as this will create a number of potential conflicts with pedestrians and the retail area and will enable higher and potentially excessive and dangerous speeds by cyclists, therefore this suggestion has been rejected.

## 8. Lighting and CCTV

- *Keeping lighting nature friendly to minimise light pollution was a recurring theme, with people also stating that it should be energy efficient and sustainable. The DOCO (Design Out Crime Officer) suggested that the lighting should be reviewed by a British Standard qualified lighting engineer and should meet the SBD (Security by Design) code. Maintenance of the lighting was also a concern, with comments made that lighting had fallen into disrepair in the past and had not been fixed.*

9.33. Response: The Preliminary Ecological Assessment (Appendix H) recognised that as a city centre location and public thoroughway, the site would be expected to continue to receive higher levels of artificial illumination from various sources. There are general principles which can be applied to external lighting in order to minimise impacts on bats. However, the lighting will meet British Standard BS 5489-1 and has been designed to point downwards to minimise light pollution and unnecessary spread, recognising this site is in the heart of the city centre. Maintenance of lighting has been considered as part of the wider review that has been undertaken. There continues to be a wider commitment to bringing forward roof top solar panels in the city centre and elsewhere to support sustainable energy generation.

- *More lighting and CCTV was also welcomed by many especially in the interviews with stakeholders, as recurring antisocial behaviour on Armada Way has been well documented. The business community also stated a hope that improvements to Armada Way, including more lighting and CCTV with clear viewing corridors, would encourage the night-time economy and make people feel less vulnerable walking from the train station into the city centre.*

9.34. Response: The support expressed in relation to improved lighting and the upgrading of the CCTV cameras is welcomed. It is agreed these changes should support, along with other initiatives, development of the night-time economy in the city centre. The scheme will improve safety for all users of the city centre, but in particular women and girls.

- *It was felt that sheltered or concealed areas should be avoided, as it prevents surveillance, and may encourage loitering or vagrants.*

9.35. Response: This point is accepted, and the final design seeks to avoid concealed areas. This includes providing clear stem trees to allow unobstructed views across Armada Way, raised canopy heights for trees, low level underplanting and low height hedges to reduce areas of concealment.

## 9. Maintenance

- *Throughout all feedback, a plan for long-term maintenance of any new scheme for Armada Way was a key concern. They were calls for reassurance there would be sufficient budget and resource to ensure so that all aspects of the scheme, including trees, planting and water features, would be maintained and a ring-fenced budget would be put in place.*

9.36. Response: The issue of maintenance featured as the top theme in relation to the consultation and engagement exercise when respondents were asked to highlight any omissions from the scheme with 190 respondents out of 667 raising this concern. When asked to identify any other concerns regarding the scheme the top theme was again maintenance with 387 respondents out of 932 citing this. In addition, organisations and individuals such as Environment Plymouth, 'STRAW', the Hoe Neighbourhood Forum, Plymouth City Centre Company, the Market Traders Association, Luke Pollard MP, and Plymouth Tree People all questioned whether the scheme would be properly maintained. It is recognised that through the public realm design and development process, the issue of the maintenance of the new areas that have been invested in has to be addressed. For the reasons set out below the Council considers that it can be. The challenges of maintaining any new capital investment in the city within the context of massive revenue budget reductions since 2010 is an enormous challenge. At present, the maintenance of the public realm is spread across different budgets and is the responsibility of several different council departments. This long-standing historical arrangement has created issues where responsibility for different parts of the public realm can end up sitting across Highways, Street Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Facilities Management Teams. The previous ageing infrastructure and hard to maintain spaces have caused major pressures, and there is room for greater efficiencies. Consequently, there is no strategic maintenance programme for the city centre and works have been largely reactionary, with little being planned beyond the short term. As a result of the same teams and services having responsibilities across the rest of Plymouth, it is recognised that there has been a loss of focus on the city centre. The existing burdens of the current public realm include a wealth of live, dead and undefined utilities, many being unrecorded, all of which makes undertaking repairs a costly and time-consuming process. The existing surface water drainage system of gullies and pipes has failed significantly in some areas, and the former ornamental watercourse of rills, pumps, pipes and tanks has become redundant. In some instances, the post-war combined sewer system has collapsed. These issues are being dealt with through the Better Places Programme, of which Armada Way is the largest, creating a high quality and robust, future proofed city centre designed for long-term sustainability. All the Better Places Programme schemes seek to deliver sustainable outcomes and address climate change. The new schemes seek to streamline and simplify layouts, spaces and infrastructure to ensure maintenance operations are as straightforward and efficient as possible. The plan for the future is for the Strategic Director for Place to convene a City Centre Public Realm Board which will coordinate and monitor all of the existing budgets. Following a detailed maintenance assessment undertaken in Spring 2023, prepared by independent experts, it was clearly demonstrated that more could be done within the existing budgets. This assessment work demonstrates that for the first five years, the City Council can maintain the new schemes through the more efficient use of these budgets. These budgets can be supplemented with provision within the Armada Way scheme for a 5-year maintenance contract commencing at the end of practical completion. This will be extended to the other Better Places Programme schemes for a period of 12 months. This maintenance contract will cover soft landscaping and water features, including the Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme infrastructure, and any trees that fail within the first 5 years. Leading up to and following the five-year period in 2030/2031 the City Council will utilise a series of new income generating activities to boost the revenue budgets, which have been assessed by a cross-departmental group. The conclusion of all this work is that better governance arrangements, better use of existing budgets, and new income generating opportunities will provide the necessary resources to ensure that not only the Armada Way scheme, but the other City Centre Better Places Programme projects can be adequately maintained.

- *There were also concerns regarding vandalism, litter, and continued anti-social behaviour, without sufficient deterrents or resources available. Suggestions made included: lots of dog waste, litter and recycling bins; anti-graffiti finishes on surfaces; and materials that will withstand activities such as BMX riders and skateboarding.*

9.37. Response: Vandalism cannot be completely designed out of any scheme, but the use of high-quality materials, and appropriate enhanced natural and CCTV surveillance can minimise the opportunities for this to happen. That has been the design approach in relation to Armada Way. In relation to litter, appropriate provision is being made in discussion with Street Services on the number, type and location of bins in the final scheme design. As indicated previously, adjustments have been incorporated into the final design to withstand the impacts of BMX and skateboarding. In relation to litter, one of the other issues raised in the consultation and engagement exercise was the potential for a water refilling station to be incorporated in the design, supporting the Plan for Plastics. The final scheme design incorporates provision for the potential for a water refilling station in Armada Way.

## **10. Disabilities**

- *There were requests to take the needs of those with disabilities into account as part of the final design and implementation of the proposed scheme. Suggestions made included: appropriate surfacing for people in wheelchairs, mobility and/or vision issues; the inclusion of appropriate lighting for people who are sensitive to hard lights; disability toilets and change facilities for children/adults with disabilities; separating the cycle path and pedestrian walkway to improve safety for people with disabilities; and the inclusion of seating and tables that cater for people in wheelchairs.*

9.38. Response: This point is accepted, and extensive discussions have taken place at various stages of the development of the Armada Way design with PADAN. The overall accessibility of Armada Way compared to its original layout is substantially enhanced. The issue of defibrillators was raised as part of the consultation. It is proposed to make provision for one these in Armada Way as part of the final scheme design. The Council has undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment for the Armada Way scheme (Appendix B).

## **11. Construction and Other**

- *When given a list of statements to agree with regarding the scheme, the most popular were: it will make the city centre more welcoming; it will be a greener space; it will help businesses attract more customers.*

9.39. Response: The representations that acknowledge that the scheme will make the city centre more welcoming, will make it a greener space, and that it will help businesses attract more customers is welcome. These comments reflect some of the wider design objectives the Armada Way scheme has sought to deliver for the benefit of the city centre.

- *Concerns were voiced regarding the timelines around the construction of the scheme and how it would be phased. There were worries that it could cause further revenue losses for businesses on Armada Way and disruption to deliveries. It was requested that there be detailed communication throughout the construction phase and involvement of stakeholder groups.*



9.40. Response: The City Council is cognisant of the various delays caused to the delivery of the Armada Way scheme to date and will continue to support business by looking at options for business rate relief if relevant. It is committed to continuing an open dialogue with traders directly and with the support of the City Centre Company. The detailed Armada Way project programme sets out that overall completion of the project is expected to be December 2025. During the entire construction phase, it is proposed to establish a regular City Centre Business Construction Forum, chaired jointly by the Chair of the City Centre Company and the Strategic Director for Place, to quickly address on the ground issues that arise during any of the Armada Way construction phases.

- *Requests were also made for the provision of an Arboricultural Method Statement and a detailed tree plan, to confirm how construction will take place around existing trees and how any translocated trees will be moved.*

9.41. Response: The Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Surveys are in the process of being updated and will be published on the Armada Way web pages in due course. These will update the position with regard to the condition of all of the existing trees ahead of construction. In due course an updated Arboricultural Method Statement will be produced to reflect the final approved scheme design.

- *The suggestion of creating implementation groups was made to ensure that the construction would take into account the detailed requirements around greenery, events, play design, businesses, cyclists and those with disabilities.*

9.42. Response: The City Council will continue to provide regular updates on progress with the Armada Way project through the Armada Way web site. It will establish a Business Construction Forum with the City Centre Company and will continue conversations with trusted partners as necessary during the various phases in the implementation of the project.

- *Working closely with landlords to ensure they will be involved in the implementation phase was also suggested especially to encourage future investment in buildings on Armada Way and its vibrancy moving forward.*

9.43. Response: This point is accepted. The City Council will continue to work with all city centre landowners and strategic partners such as Homes England, Historic England, the Department for Transport, the Environment Agency, South West Water, British Land, Sustrans, and others, to ensure they are aware of the construction phases of Armada Way. The City Centre Company and city centre businesses have expressed their delight with the scale and ambition of the new plans and have fully endorsed the vision to recapture the scale and grandeur of Armada Way. As highlighted in previous consultations, there are a number of future potential investors, some of whom already have planning permission for the re-use of buildings along Armada Way, who the City Council will work with to encourage future investments.

### **General Conclusions**

9.44. In addition to the main findings highlighted in the ECF report, a number of detailed observations were received from a number of organisations. The main points in response to the issues raised

in these representations have been considered by the Armada Way Project Team as part of reflecting on what further changes should be made to the final scheme design.

- 9.45. Taking account of all of the main findings above, it is considered that changes and improvements can be made to the final Armada Way scheme design, whilst continuing to deliver its overarching objectives. The proposed changes to the Armada Way scheme design, in response to the Autumn 2023 consultation and engagement exercise, are set out in a later section.

## **12. Legal representations raised about the Consultation and Engagement Exercise**

- 9.46. Harrison Grant Ring (HGR), solicitors representing the claimant in the High Court litigation over the now withdrawn decision of 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023, have raised a number of concerns in a letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023. These are set out in full, along with the Council's responses.

### *Reliance on previous consultations*

1.1 *The consultation survey of 17 October 2023 ("the Survey") states in the introduction that the Council has reviewed previous consultations and feedback received to those consultations and that the insight gathered has played an important part in shaping the proposed new design. The Survey also makes clear that the focus of the Council is on the elements that are different to the old scheme.*

1.2 *It is not clear whether the Council intend to rely on results from their 2018 consultation. To do so would be inappropriate, given the length of time that has passed since that consultation took place, the fact that the 2018 consultation did not detail the extensive tree loss that the scheme involved and the fact that the present scheme differs greatly from that proposed in the 2018 consultation.*

1.3 *Concerns relating to the February 2023 consultation were set out in our letter of 23 February 2023, including the lack of notice provided, the lack of time for a response, failure to provide access to relevant information and a failure to consult at a formative stage.*

1.4 *Our client's judicial review claim into the 14 March 2023 decision to approve the Armada Way Scheme details how the March 2023 Engagement Report into the February 2023 consultation ("the Engagement Report") was biased, erroneous and irrational.*

1.5 *Relying on an out-of-date 2018 consultation and the flawed February 2023 consultation and unlawful Engagement Report in relation to the old elements of the scheme while focusing this consultation on the new elements, fails to satisfy the requirement to consult at a sufficiently formative stage (R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning [1985] LGR 168).*

- 9.47. Response: The Council has responded to previous letters regarding the points made and does not accept that it is inappropriate to consider previous Armada Way consultations; it considers that they are generally informative and do offer insight on what people would like and what they would not like from this important element of public realm. This includes the insight offered by the February 2023 engagement that many respondents (including the claimant and STRAW) were opposed to any of the Armada Way trees being felled. However, as is made clear from this report, the focus has been on the responses to the recent engagement exercise, and on the scheme that is now proposed (which does not involve the felling of any trees). Finally, although the Council has refuted that the March 2023 engagement report was in any way unlawful, it is confirmed that this report (as opposed to the responses to that consultation) has not been taken into account in devising the new scheme or the consultation upon it, or the consideration then given following this consultation. As the new scheme does not involve the felling of any trees, and the proposed translocation of some trees is entirely new (and has been the subject of discrete, and express

consultation), the particular criticisms made of that report by the claimant are not considered to be anyway relevant.

*Quantifiable responses demonstrate bias for scheme*

2.1 *The Survey responses that can be quantitatively assessed do not allow for any response objecting to or critical of the scheme. For example, there is no quantitative option to support the retention of all remaining trees and not to relocate any of them, no quantitative option to suggest the play park is too big and no quantitative option to suggest the cycle path is not fit for purpose supported.*

2.2 *Quantitative data taken from the Survey is therefore highly likely to demonstrate support for the scheme, which in turn will impact on the consultation report.*

2.3 *This concern is compounded by the fact that the online Survey initially required respondents to select from a list of options before they could proceed to the next question. For some of the questions, this effectively forced respondents to tick something that was supportive of the scheme.*

2.4 *While the online Survey was amended following complaints from the public, anyone who had already responded would have been forced to tick at least some positive comments to complete the survey. Furthermore, ECF's announcements about this change on 20 October only referred to the play park section of the Survey. The online and paper Survey still stated, for example, that "TWO PRIORITIES" should be selected for the nature and greenery section, without suggesting this could be skipped. In addition, hard copies of the Survey deposited in the central library were not updated.*

2.5 *The lack of space for qualitative responses on the paper version of the Survey made it even more difficult for respondents to voice objections to the scheme.*

9.48. Response: The approach to the consultation was a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative mechanisms, with a number of suggested responses to each question based upon previous feedback received and/or the advice of experts in that area. For example, the play village questions were shaped upon feedback from a Council officer responsible for play infrastructure. If the suggested responses did not cover the viewpoint of a respondent, they had the opportunity of using the free text option in that section to highlight their views. Respondents could also choose 'other' on every quantifiable question and state their own option, which were then coded for themes as part of the analysis. Furthermore, just one week into the launch of the consultation the decision was taken to remove the requirement to complete all quantifiable questions to give more freedom to the respondents. So far as concerns the trees, a direct question was asked for respondents' comments on the proposed translocation of trees. This did not give any suggested responses and was designed to elicit the full range of qualitative feedback including opposition from any respondent who favoured keeping all the trees and did not want any to be relocated. On the closed question within nature and greenery, those who opposed translocation most regularly chose 'other' and stated that they wanted all existing trees to be kept which is clearly shown and stated within the consultation report. Similarly, respondents were asked, in an open fashion, to give "any other feedback" regarding nature and greenery. As for the play village, respondents were asked, in an open question, what would they "change" about the proposed play village, which clearly invited comments about its proposed size. A similar approach was taken in respect of the proposed cycle path. The resulting consultation report by ECF is a factual analysis of all feedback – positive and negative – to a highly granular level.

9.49. Upon launch of the on-line survey, it is correct that a technical glitch occurred whereby respondents could not skip play village questions if they had selected, they were not interested in that element of the design. However, this glitch was rectified within two hours of the launch and instructions were added to make it clear that respondents could skip those questions. Respondents were asked to state two priorities on the nature and greenery question so that it could be clear what were considered the most important themes, and as the survey had been launched with that instruction it was not changed. However, the asterix indicating 'required

fields' was removed and that thereby also removed the requirement to tick two options. As the paper surveys had already been printed, these were not reprinted as that would create a huge waste of paper and trees. However, it should be noted that of the 500 paper surveys available at the library only 69 paper surveys were returned and 14 of those were photocopied surveys by STRAW (known as each survey had a unique reference number and a representative of STRAW emailed to asked that those photocopies would still be included as the answers were not copied). A number of the paper surveys were incomplete, in that not all questions had been answered, but they were still inputted and taken into account in the analysis meaning that if respondents had only chosen one option instead of two they were still included. In addition, those that had completed the survey in that time were contacted to inform them that they could resubmit if desired.

- 9.50. Any respondent who was completing the paper version could have submitted additional paper with their comments. In addition, the telephone line was available for people wanting verbally to provide their feedback.

*Failure to provide relevant information*

3.3 *The Council has failed to provide important information relating to key elements of the Scheme, notably the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) and the translocation of trees. Our client repeatedly requested details about the SUDS scheme, said to be the first of its kind in the world.*

3.4 *Our client understands that underground tanks that will be utilised by the scheme are already in place. Despite this, the tanks are not shown on any public plans and our client either received no response to her requests or was told no further details were available.*

3.3 *The risks regarding the translocation of trees have seemingly yet to be considered. Information about such risks was certainly not provided to consultees. Our client requested information on the translocation of trees on 27 October 2023. A report, apparently prepared after her request and dated 8 November 2023, was not provided until 15 November 2023. No information was provided on the difficulties of translocating trees, including the costs of doing so, and the high risk of trees dying following translocation, something that PCC has previously accepted.*

3.4 *Requests for meetings by STRAW with ECF and the design team were refused on the basis that it would not be equitable to meet some groups and not others. Despite this, ECF told councillors that they hosted a series of workshops with "key groups", including "people, older people, younger people, families" and the Let's Talk website refers to feedback submitted in "stakeholder meetings/workshops".*

- 9.51. Response: In relation to the previous scheme there were some technical drawings available within the Knowledge Hub on aspects such as tree pit designs, surface and ground make-ups etc in the previous consultation. For the "Let's Talk Armada Way" consultation, a schematic was published which sought to illustrate the relationship between the underground infrastructure required for the SuDS network and the aboveground elements of the design. Highly complex technical information relating to the exact parameters of the SuDS infrastructures, flows, capacities etc are currently under preparation for use in any construction phase (should the new scheme be approved by Cabinet).

- 9.52. The underground tanks are already in place; as stated elsewhere in this report they exist from the original 1980's ornamental watercourse. Then can be viewed on the schematic found on page 15 of YGS's November 2023 Tree Translocation Report, published as additional supplementary information as part of the consultation on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023. As per the key on the schematic, the underground tanks are marked by blue boxes and are located approximately: on the corner of Armada Way and Mayflower Street; midway between Mayflower and Cornwall Street; and midway between Cornwall Street and New George Street.

- 9.53. As to the risks of translocation, respondents were informed in the consultation materials that “Translocation is a complex process which is not undertaken lightly and it carries some risk of failure.” They were also informed that whilst the Council would work really hard to ensure that the trees would survive the process, if any did not survive, the Council would replace them with a semi-mature tree. Respondents had sufficient material in order to give an informed response. YGS’ November 2023 report, uploaded on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023, provided further information in respect of the six individual trees. There has been no specific cost benefit analysis undertaken with regard to the proposal to translocate six trees, but the issue has been considered as part of balancing the other design objectives of the scheme.
- 9.54. It is correct that STRAW requested a meeting with ECF and a Council representative, which was not acceded to. No other workshops were offered to groups or organisations with Council officers and ECF. ECF did undertake workshops with traditionally underrepresented groups, such as families, older and younger people or people with disabilities (none of which were expert or special interest groups). All high priority stakeholders were offered a 1-2-1 interview with ECF and the option to submit a detailed written response. STRAW did attend an interview but its representative chose not to comment, with its focus being on the written response only. It may also be noted that STRAW chose not to comment on YGS’s November 2023 report.

*Inclusion of irrelevant and misleading information*

4.1 *The Survey includes information that is irrelevant and misleading. In particular, the “urban-forest” referred to under the “Nature and Greenery” section of the Survey does not form part of the Scheme and is entirely separate from it. Its inclusion in the Survey suggests it is part of the Armada Way Scheme and is therefore misleading.*

4.2 *The Survey also suggested that the six trees designated for translocation had to go to progress the Scheme. This is also misleading, since a re-design to incorporate six trees is clearly possible, even if it is not the Council’s preferred option.*

4.3 *The new trees were referred to as being between 3.5-8m tall. In fact, we understand only 1 new tree out of 165 will be over 7 metres tall and the vast majority (148) will be under 6.5 metres.*

- 9.55. Response: The inclusion of urban forest reference was part of the wider narrative around a greener city centre. It was included because the proposed ‘urban forest’ is on Armada Way.
- 9.56. The consultation materials stated that “In addition to this scheme” (i.e. Armada Way) the Council was “currently working on plans for a separate new urban-forest project (a small, dense patch of trees planted closely together)”. It went on to say that “Detailed information regarding the proposed urban-forest outside the Crowne Plaza will be published when this project is further developed.” In other words the consultation materials made it clear that the ‘urban forest’ was a separate project to the Armada Way scheme. This was not misleading. Nor was it irrelevant to inform respondents of other ‘green’ proposals the Council was currently working on in the city centre.
- 9.57. In relation to translocation, the consultation materials stated “Because of the reasons highlighted above, if we do not translocate the six trees then this proposed scheme is not possible.” This was accurate and not misleading; those six trees would have had to be translocated for the particular scheme in question to progress. It is correct that a *different* scheme (or no scheme at all) may have required no, or fewer, trees to be translocated; this fact would have been evident to any respondent. Theoretically, there are multiple different arrangements which could address the different design considerations as has now been demonstrated by the fact that, having reviewed the designs again in light of the consultation responses, the final design only requires the translocation of four trees whilst still achieving the overall scheme objectives.

- 9.58. The consultation materials clearly stated that “All the trees when planted will be at a height of between 3.5 to 8 metres (or 11 to 27 feet) and will be selected for their suitability for an urban landscape. They will grow significantly over time.” The table that followed *immediately below* this text showed the numbers of trees of each minimum height. They included 12 trees of no less than 3 meters, one tree of between 7-8 metres, and 152 of heights between those ranges. The summary description of the heights of the new trees was entirely accurate, with the detail in the table providing a breakdown.

### *Equalities Concerns*

5.1 *It is not clear what steps ECF took to ensure the views of adults with learning difficulties were taken into account, including for example how appropriate information was communicated, whether sufficient time/means was provided for persons to process information, whether their understanding was checked and whether and how carer-advocates were involved in the process. Our client understands that ECF staff visited Ambito, a group offering support to disabled persons. We understand that Ambito staff had to ask ECF to stop their presentation because they did not feel the customers (some of whom have profound difficulties) understood. Despite this, and the fact that the customers did not understand, Ambito staff were asked to help customers fill in the forms.*

5.2 *It is also not clear whether and how school children were approached by ECF or PCC through this consultation. If they were, it is not clear whether and how children were interviewed, whether age-appropriate information was provided, what provision was made for children to reach an informed understanding of the pros and cons of the scheme, what methods of communication were used and whether children’s views will be taken into account.*

- 9.59. Response: ECF designed a consultation and engagement process that took full account of equality and inclusion issues. This is reflected in a section of their report regarding accessibility as shown at Appendix D. With regard to the stated concern relating to the facilitated event with Ambito, ECF do not accept that the event prejudiced in any way the ability of the users who attended to make their views known on the scheme. Emails were exchanged with the manager at Ambito prior to attending to agree on the best approach and it was agreed to just hold informal chats, and complete paper surveys only where appropriate (which was mainly with carers). In addition, ECF worked with an external expert provider to produce an interactive Easy-read version of the survey which was also made available to relevant groups and organisations. Following the Ambito event, staff fed back to ECF that they appreciated the direct engagement on the subject and that ECF had engaged fully with attendees, in fact they thanked ECF for adapting their communications accordingly which they stated was ‘refreshing’. Ambito staff did not ask the ECF team to stop at any time.
- 9.60. More generally, ECF worked with an external provider to produce an interactive easy-read version of the survey which was also made available to relevant groups and organisations.
- 9.61. Young children were not consulted as part of the consultation. A workshop was organised with a small group of young people, aged 13 to 17 years old, from the PCC Community Outreach programme, selected as they are predominantly young people who regularly spend time in the city centre. The session was supported by youth workers. The schools in the area were emailed information about the Armada Way consultation with a link to the website, as have all stakeholders, so that they could circulate it to their staff and parents only.

*Amendments during the consultation*

6.1 In addition to amending the online Survey (see para.2.4 above), information was added to the consultation while it was ongoing. These changes were not publicised. Persons who responded early on in the process did not have access to all the information. Respondents were not informed of these changes.

- 9.62. Response: Throughout the consultation there were news stories regarding elements of the scheme, for example on the SuDs / trees / heritage. All of these were published on the “Let’s Talk Armada Way” website and were promoted on social media and in the Council’s e-newsletter. However, none of this information was new. It was a deep dive into information already available. On 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023, additional information on nature and greenery, translocation and the play village were uploaded to the project website, including YGS’ November 2023 report. An email was sent to all respondents to advise of the new information and offer the opportunity for respondents to re-submit their feedback. Respondents were advised that only information from new submissions would be included in the final analysis.
- 9.63. ECF have confirmed that 12 re-submissions were received throughout the consultation period. It is therefore entirely incorrect to suggest that these changes were not publicised, and that respondents were not duly informed. Indeed, a number took the opportunity given to them to make updated submissions.

*Letter before Claim from HGR and Reply from the Plymouth City Council*

- 9.64. Appendix S sets out a letter before claim received from Harrison Grant Ring solicitors and the City Council’s response to this. This letter before claim raises several issues and this report seeks to provide a formal response to two of those matters. The first is the need for a further consultation; the second is in relation to the recommendation contained in the draft Cabinet report presented for pre-decision scrutiny to the Growth & Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2024 regarding delegation to the Strategic Director for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure.
- 9.65. In relation to the first issue, the City Council does not intend to undertake a further consultation on the scheme. The City Council was entitled to choose a reasonable basis for the “Let’s Talk Armada Way” consultation. That has been done. It is not a good complaint in law to say that the City Council might have designed the consultation differently; or might have approached how questions were framed from a different angle. In relation to criticisms levelled at the consultation in the letter from Harrison Grant Ring in their letter of 18 December 2023, these are dealt with in 9.46 – 9.63 above. This includes, for example, consideration of the complaint about the approach to quantitative and qualitative mechanisms within the consultation. It also addresses the early improvements that were made in relation to the consultation portal.
- 9.66. In relation to the second issue the draft Cabinet report presented to the Growth & Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2024 contained, a recommendation which stated:

7. Grants authority to the Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure to take all such action as necessary to implement the project including all subsequent design amendments (excluding amendments which impact on the retention of any existing trees or the approved translocation of trees), scheme approval submissions, procurement and contract awards associated with developing and delivering the

Armada Way scheme through to construction and completion, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members.

*Reason: To enable the efficient development and delivery of the Armada Way scheme to meet the requirements and timescales of the various funding programmes.*

- 9.67. It is perfectly normal for matters of operational detail and delivery to be delegated to a senior officer of the City Council which is what this recommendation intended to do. As such the claim in relation to this matter is considered meritless. However, as the recommendation does not form part of this report pending further work on the construction costs, that will be considered by Cabinet at a later date.



## 10. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FINAL ARMADA WAY DESIGN

10.1. Following extensive review of the feedback received during the consultation, a total of 10 amendments have been included within the final scheme design. These changes, which take into account the detailed comments received by groups and organisations and common themes from individual comments, and are outlined below:

1. Retention of two extra existing trees – T007 Cockspur Thorn and T118 – Hybrid Whitebeam which can now be accommodated following changes to the design in their respective locations. This now results in only four trees being translocated from Armada Way to The Park. This responds to the desire of some environmental groups and a large number of individuals who have requested that more of the existing trees are retained in their current location to retain canopy cover or fears relating to risk of survival, and or cost of translocating trees.
2. Some tree species selection has been modified to respond to the requests made by Food Plymouth and Plymouth Tree People. This includes changing the proposed single 'Tree of Heaven' to a London Plane tree. Whilst it should be noted that the higher ratio of birch is a result of the small clusters of Himalayan birch which are designed to create special arboricultural features in their own right, the new scheme responds to comments on the 10% : 20% : 30% rule by reducing the number of Birch to be replaced with Red Maples, Kobus Magnolia and Cherry.
3. The final design includes an increased amount of accessible green space within the scheme at around 21% which is beyond that of the scheme which was consulted on. This has been enabled through a series of small interventions, and through the removal of the east-west footways as listed at (1) which has reduced the extent of hard surfacing. This responds to comments made by some environmental groups.
4. Removal of two east-west pedestrian footpaths to reduce conflict of two separate paths crossing the cycle way at the point of chicane, meaning that cyclists only have to focus on the movement of pedestrians using the north-south axial route. This is considered a betterment to the previous design by reducing risk of conflict and maintains a high scoring LTN 1/20 compliant scheme.
5. Changing of the colour of the granite denoting the cycle way to a dark pink hue to provide a strong visual differentiation to the other pedestrian areas. Changes to the colour of the pedestrian and cycle shared space / interface areas to correlate with the dark pink hue. This responds directly to comments received from individuals and visual impairment, accessibility and disability groups.
6. The new scheme will include a considerable amount of extra cycle parking in the form of Sheffield stands and cycle hoops onto lamp columns. This addresses concerns from cycling groups that there should be multiple locations for parking along Armada Way and not just focused on the mobility hub and covered cycle area.
7. Further changes will be made to the pedestrian and cycle wayfinding to enable the cycle way and its use to be very clearly demarcated. This is in addition to the already proposed wayfinding monoliths and in-ground way markers but will include other pedestrian level markers and directional infrastructure strengthen the delineation of the modal spaces. By reducing the risk of conflict, this change responds to comments made by individuals and accessibility and disability groups.

8. The final scheme includes for the addition of a minimum of one drinking water station on Armada Way which will help reduce the use of single plastics and align with Plymouth's Plan for Plastics. This was requested by some individuals who completed the consultation and is considered positive in encouraging longer dwell times in the space and access to free drinking water. The position is to be agreed but will likely be located in or close to the play village area.
9. An increased amount of seating of various types has been added to the play village area to ensure that there is enough seating opportunity for parents whose children want to use the facilities. This responds to comments received requesting that enough seating is provided so that parents and carers can sit and watch their children playing safely across multiple parts of the play village and that sufficient seating and associated space adjacent is provided for persons with mobility impairments and wheelchairs.
10. Defibrillator(s) will be installed on Armada Way in response to comments from individuals. There are currently a number of defibrillators across the wider city centre area. As a result, there is opportunity to address the 'gap' that exists along the Armada Way corridor. Details of location will be confirmed during detailed design stages.

## 11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

11.1. The Council has assessed numerous potential alternative options for the Armada Way scheme design following the “Let’s Talk Armada Way” Consultation and Engagement process. Enabling and delivering such a hugely complex public realm scheme of this scale as a single transformative intervention has to address numerous design, operational and management issues. In reviewing opportunities and alternative options, it is important to consider the very many factors at play, from the overarching ambition and key objectives, through to the technicalities of smaller details.

11.2. There are, of course, a large number of design permutations which could be progressed; however, the Council have considered the following options:

### **Alternative 1: Do Nothing.**

11.3. This was rejected as it would not be consistent with the commitments to public realm improvements and other infrastructure policies in the Plymouth Plan and the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan. It would also leave Armada Way in an unacceptable state given the works undertaken to date.

### **Alternative 2: Abort the Armada Way scheme in its entirety.**

11.4. This was rejected as this would not be consistent with the commitments to public realm improvements and other infrastructure policies in the Plymouth Plan and the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan. It would also not be consistent with the commitments already made under the Transforming Cities Fund programme and would result in funding already secured having to be paid back.

### **Alternative 3: Re-design the Armada Way scheme in its entirety.**

11.5. This was rejected as to start the whole design process from scratch would result in the loss of funding given the timescales involved in this option and would be unlikely to result in a substantively different overall design taking account of the various design objectives to which the scheme seeks to respond.

### **Alternative 4: Implement an Armada Way scheme that retains all 20 original trees.**

11.6. This was rejected as although 15 of the original trees have now been incorporated in the proposed final design, 1 tree has since died, and the other 4 would have an unacceptable impact on the delivery of other scheme objectives if retained in their current position.

### **Alternative 5: Implement a different Armada Way final scheme design to that now proposed.**

11.7. This was rejected, because whilst there are always other design changes that could have been incorporated in the final design, a balance has to be struck between competing scheme objectives and the various views expressed in the various consultations, leading to a final considered judgement by Cabinet as to the scheme it considers should be constructed that achieves the best overall results and value for money. Detailed consideration was given to further cycleway alignment amendments, including the removal of the two chicane elements. This has been rejected as the chicane is an important component in reducing the long-range forward visibility which would encourage faster speeds. The inclusion of the northern chicane is particularly important due to the gradient of the land in this section, which without appropriate intervention would only encourage further speeding. At the southern end, the chicane is required to bring the cycle way

adjacent to the new covered cycle parking area and the connection onwards into New George Street (east). The clear, central 12m wide corridor containing the cycle and pedestrian routes is a driving factor of the design and it is important that this infrastructure stays within this defined zone for the core area of the scheme. Further consideration was also given to the provision of a smaller play space within the final scheme design. This has been rejected as it is considered that the play village is not of an overly large size for a city the size of Plymouth, and that it will generate a significant amount of footway and longer dwell time in the city centre. It is also not considered to be overly large given the total floor area of Armada Way. This is a significant objective of the Armada Way scheme as it will create a stronger, more robust local economy with more visitors and therefore more footfall to local businesses. The play village also responds directly to our ambitions for introducing a significant amount of new residential growth to the city centre and will act as an exciting and unique reason for families with children to move to the city centre and when opportunities are created. It is therefore not considered that an alternative option which seeks to reduce the scale, and subsequent ambition, of the play village would be the right thing to do for the long-term growth and change of use of the city centre.

## 12. 19 FEBRUARY 2024 CABINET ARMADA WAY REPORT – SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1. On 22 January 2024 the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a pre-decision scrutiny of a planned report to Cabinet on 19 February 2024 concerning the Armada Way public realm scheme. The scrutiny committee considered 507 pages of material including a draft of the Cabinet report itself and 13 appendices of supporting technical information.
- 12.2. On 05 February 2024 the recommendations from the scrutiny committee were presented to the Cabinet who resolved to note the recommendations of the Growth & Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee arising from its meeting on 22 January 2024 and resolved to formally respond to them when the Cabinet considers the Armada Way scheme at its meeting on 19 February 2024.
- 12.3. Careful consideration has now been given to each of the scrutiny recommendations. A formal response from the Cabinet to each of these is set out below.
- 13.4 Scrutiny Recommendation: Having considered the recommendations set out in the draft 19 February 2024 Cabinet report regarding the Armada Way Scheme, the committee resolved to fully support the new scheme ahead of the scheduled Cabinet decision.

**Cabinet Response:** The Cabinet welcomes the cross-party support of the Growth & Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Armada Way scheme having undertaken its pre-decision scrutiny.

- 13.5 Scrutiny Recommendation: The committee also resolved to thank the Cabinet Members, Officers and Members of the Public for their thorough report and contributions.

**Cabinet Response:** The Cabinet welcomes the response of the scrutiny committee on the thoroughness of the report and the contributions made in response to questions at its meeting on 22 January 2022.

- 13.6 Scrutiny Recommendation: The City Centre Public Realm Board includes cross-party membership.

**Cabinet Response:** The proposed City Centre Public Realm Board is a new operational arrangement to better coordinate existing funding and planned maintenance works. As paragraph 9.36 of the draft Cabinet report set out, the plan for the future was for the Strategic Director for Place to convene the board to coordinate and monitor all existing budgets so that these can be more efficiently managed, alongside the proposed 5-year Armada Way maintenance contract and possible new income streams. As an operational group it would not be appropriate for this to have political representation, however if the Growth & Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee had any concerns regarding maintenance or other city centre issues cross-party consideration could be given to any concerns in the future. Political oversight will be provided through normal One-to-One Cabinet Member meetings with both the Cabinet Member for Finance who has overall responsibility for the city centre and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change. In addition, Cabinet at its meeting on 14 August 2023 resolved to recast city centre governance arrangements to reflect

the scale of the regeneration opportunity in the area (Minute 34 refers). A Strategic Investment and Regeneration Board (made up of senior council officials, chaired by the Chief Executive and senior government and agency officials) meets quarterly to coordinate city centre strategic rather than operational matters. A quarterly City Centre Projects Oversight and Delivery Board of key city partners will coordinate the delivery of existing in-train city centre projects, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Finance. A monthly City Centre Officer Working Group, chaired by the Service Director for Economic Development will coordinate detailed delivery issues on individual regeneration projects.

- 13.7 Scrutiny Recommendation: The provision of waste bins should be of the combined litter and recycling type.

**Cabinet Response:** The Cabinet welcomes the support for commensurate recycling facilities and appreciates the role that recycling bins have in encouraging a more sustainable approach to waste, which is essential near shops in the city centre. As stated by Councillor Tom Briars-Delve at the Growth & Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 January 2024, the design team have been asked to ensure sufficient recycling bins linked to the Climate Impact Assessment.

- 13.8 Scrutiny Recommendation: Further consideration should be given to the provision of outdoor gym equipment in the play area.

**Cabinet Response:** Further consideration has been given to the provision of outdoor gym equipment in the play area. Rather than providing fixed equipment, which potentially will be an additional maintenance liability, the Armada Way design has sought to include a number of flexible and adaptable spaces which can be used for informal outdoor recreation and exercise. In addition, the city centre is already well served by commercial gyms and nearby green and blue public spaces, and as the population of the city centre increases, the opportunity for these to expand will grow.

- 13.9 Scrutiny Recommendation: Further considerations should be given to how to improve community engagement in the delivery of the project (e.g. community painting event for bird boxes).

**Cabinet Response:** Having considered how to improve community engagement in the project, it has been concluded that this would best be achieved by collaborating with local schools and others, linked to the work of the City Council under its behavioural change initiatives within the 2024 – 2027 Net Zero Action Plan. The intention would be to raise wider awareness of climate change and biodiversity issues at the appropriate point during the construction phase of Armada Way by working with schools and others in preparing the planned bug and bee hotels for installation.

- 3.10 Scrutiny Recommendation: The Cabinet will use best endeavours to ensure that the project is completed on time and within budget.

**Cabinet Response:** “Best endeavours” has a precise legal meaning and would not be appropriate for the management of a capital public realm project of this nature. In addition to normal monthly capital budget monitoring by the Finance department, the Cabinet Member for Finance will receive quarterly reports on spend against the eventual approved budget to enable Member oversight of the scheme and to ensure the commitment to value for money is achieved.

- 3.11 Scrutiny Recommendation: Cabinet should give consideration on how to assess overall economic impact of the project and to report back to an appropriate meeting of the Growth and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee.

**Cabinet Response:** An overall economic impact assessment of the project will be undertaken in partnership with the Economic Development department to an appropriate methodology and this will be presented to the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee upon completion of the project.

- 3.12 Scrutiny Recommendation: Further consideration should be given to improving the 1:1 replacement ratios for failed translocated trees.

**Cabinet Response:** The Cabinet welcomes the recommendation to increase the replacement ratio in relation to the translocated trees. A commitment was made in paragraph 9.7 of the draft Cabinet report that if any tree did not survive translocation or died within 5 years, it would be replaced with a semi-mature tree, with priority given to replacement trees being planted in the city centre to increase canopy cover. It is proposed to increase this ratio to 1:5 reflecting the wider commitment to tree planting in the city centre.

- 3.13 Scrutiny Recommendation: Consideration of inclusion of braille on the plaques placed under trees.

**Cabinet Response:** As paragraph 9.38 of the draft Cabinet report made clear, the Armada Way scheme has been designed with inclusivity in mind. This has included incorporating accessible green space and play, sensory areas, wheelchair seating opportunities, and more clearly defined paths. There have been extensive discussions with PADAN on detailed aspects of the design so that disability needs have been fully considered throughout the development of the design. Only about 7% of people who are registered blind or partially sighted can use braille. The City Council will therefore continue to work with PADAN throughout the implementation phase on the final design of the plaques.

### 13. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1. The City Council has carefully considered the responses to the Autumn 2023 consultation, which consultation has been informed by the results of previous consultation and engagement exercises going back to 2018, including the criticisms made of elements of those earlier consultations. It has also considered various other alternative options, including not proceeding with the Armada Way scheme at all, or totally re-designing it. Taking into account the policy framework for the Better Places Programme and the Armada Way scheme in particular the overall conclusion is that there remains a strong case for transformational change in Armada Way.
- 13.2. The Autumn 2023 consultation and engagement exercise has raised some further helpful suggestions for improvements or changes to the scheme. The City Council considers that a number of sensible changes can be made to the scheme that was the subject of the consultation and has now made these in the final design it now wishes to take forward. The City Council has therefore concluded that the Armada Way scheme should proceed to implementation with these 10 key design changes.
- 13.3. The City Council has also taken into account the recommendations of the Growth & Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its pre-decision scrutiny of the draft 19 February 2024 Cabinet report, and made further changes in response.
- 13.4. The recommendations to the Cabinet are therefore that it:
1. Notes the outcome of the “Let’s Talk Armada Way” October/November 2023 Consultation and Engagement Exercise as considered and set out in the report.
  2. Agrees to the proposed changes to the Armada Way scheme in response to the “Let’s Talk Armada Way” Consultation and Engagement Exercise as set out in paragraph 10.1 of the report.
  3. Agrees the response, set out in Section 12 of the report, to the recommendations arising from the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the Armada Way Scheme.
  4. Approves the Armada Way final scheme design as summarised in paragraph 1.4 of the report and Appendix L.
  5. Directs the Strategic Director for Place to take all necessary steps to confirm a final construction cost for the approved Armada Way design and to report back to a subsequent meeting of the Cabinet for approval.
  6. Directs the Strategic Director for Place to establish a City Centre Public Realm Board, with representatives from relevant City Council departments and the City Centre Company, to coordinate and monitor all existing public realm revenue maintenance budgets and oversee new income-generating initiatives.