

ST GEORGE'S SQUARE REVIVAL: CONSULTATION RESULTS

Report

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Prepared for:

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Kirklees Metropolitan Council is looking to revive St George's Square as part of Huddersfield's wider Renaissance Programme which is delivering more open spaces, greenery and traffic-free areas. The aim of the revival is to turn the Square into an attractive public space suitable for events and bringing together transport facilities, creating a hub for buses, trains and taxis. The Council consulted on this matter in 2005 and received public support for the idea.
- 1.2 The revival of St George's Square will involve rerouting Railway Street in front of the Britannia Buildings to create a large pedestrian area stretching from the station to John William Street. Access to Railway Street and the Square will be limited to buses, taxis and delivery vehicles with public access to the station car park and drop-off point via John William Street. More bus routes will travel through the Square supported by the addition of two new bus stops.
- 1.3 A design competition was held to identify suitable designs for St George's Square. Three were taken forward to public consultation. The designs are shown on the following pages as Figure 1.1, Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3.
- 1.4 The public consultation involved a staffed public exhibition in St George's Square from 4th – 6th September and in New Street from 7th – 9th September. Approximately 1,810 people attended the exhibition and all were invited to complete a feedback form to identify a favoured option and provide any other comments. Feedback was also provided via voting booths at The Kingsgate Centre, The Packhorse Centre and Huddersfield train station. People were also able to vote online on the Council's internet site and provide written comments to the Council using a FREEPOST address.
- 1.5 This report provides a summary of the feedback submitted via the above channels. It is authored by consultants Steer Davies Gleave, who were employed by the Council to help staff the public exhibition and analyse the consultation responses.

FIGURE 1.1 OPTION ONE



FIGURE 1.2 OPTION TWO

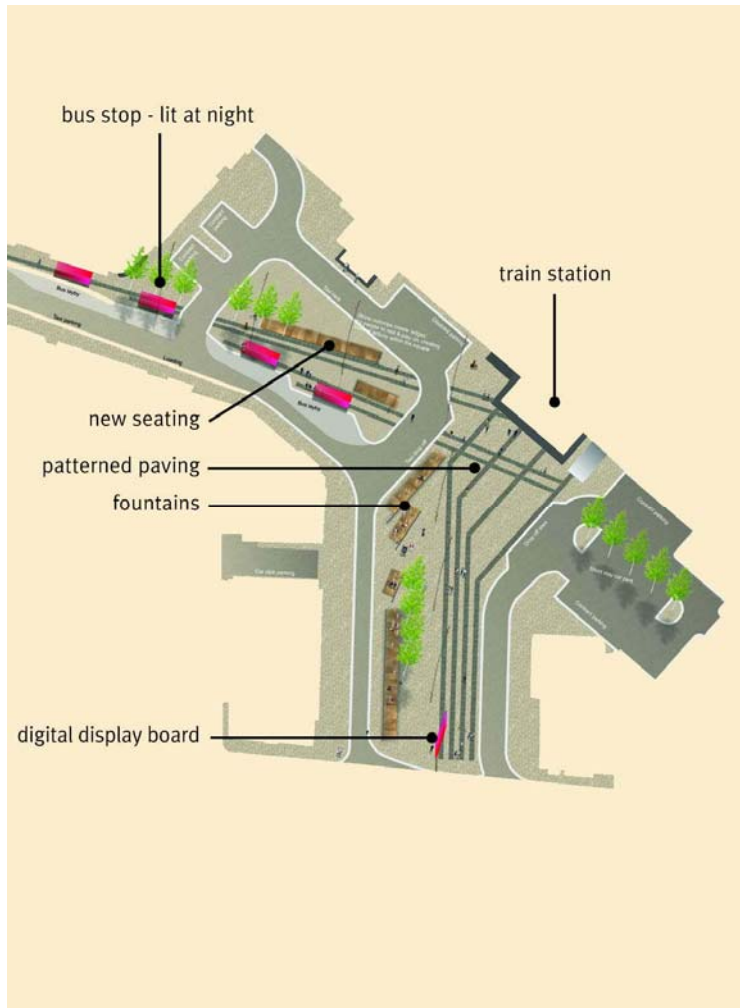


FIGURE 1.3 **OPTION THREE**



Report structure

- 1.6 This section provides an introduction to the report.
- Section Two documents the key consultation findings;
 - Section Three summarises the comments received about Option One;
 - Section Four summarises the comments received about Option Two;
 - Section Five summarises the comments received about Option Three; and
 - Section Six provides details of all other feedback.
- 1.7 Direct quotations are used throughout the report to support the findings and are shown in italics to distinguish them from the commentary.

2. KEY FINDINGS

Introduction

2.1 2,433 people provided written feedback about the revival of St George’s Square. The breakdown of feedback submitted via the different channels is shown in Table 2.1.

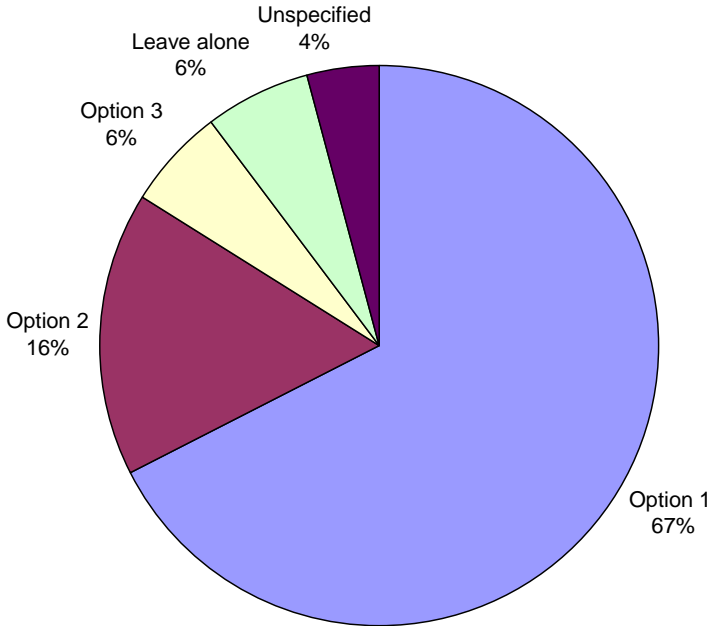
TABLE 2.1 SOURCE OF FEEDBACK

| | No. of people submitting feedback | % of all feedback |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Voting booth | 1,576 | 65% |
| Exhibition | 626 | 26% |
| Internet | 195 | 8% |
| Letter | 24 | 1% |
| Email | 12 | 0% |
| Total | 2,433 | 100% |

Preferred option

2.2 Those providing feedback were asked which option they preferred. The results are presented in Figure 2.1.

FIGURE 2.1 PREFERRED OPTION



2.3 The majority of people providing feedback (2,181) selected a favoured option. 154 people (6%) felt St George’s Square should be left as it is and 98 people (4%) did not specify whether they had a favoured option or felt the Square should be left as it is.

2.4 Preferred option:

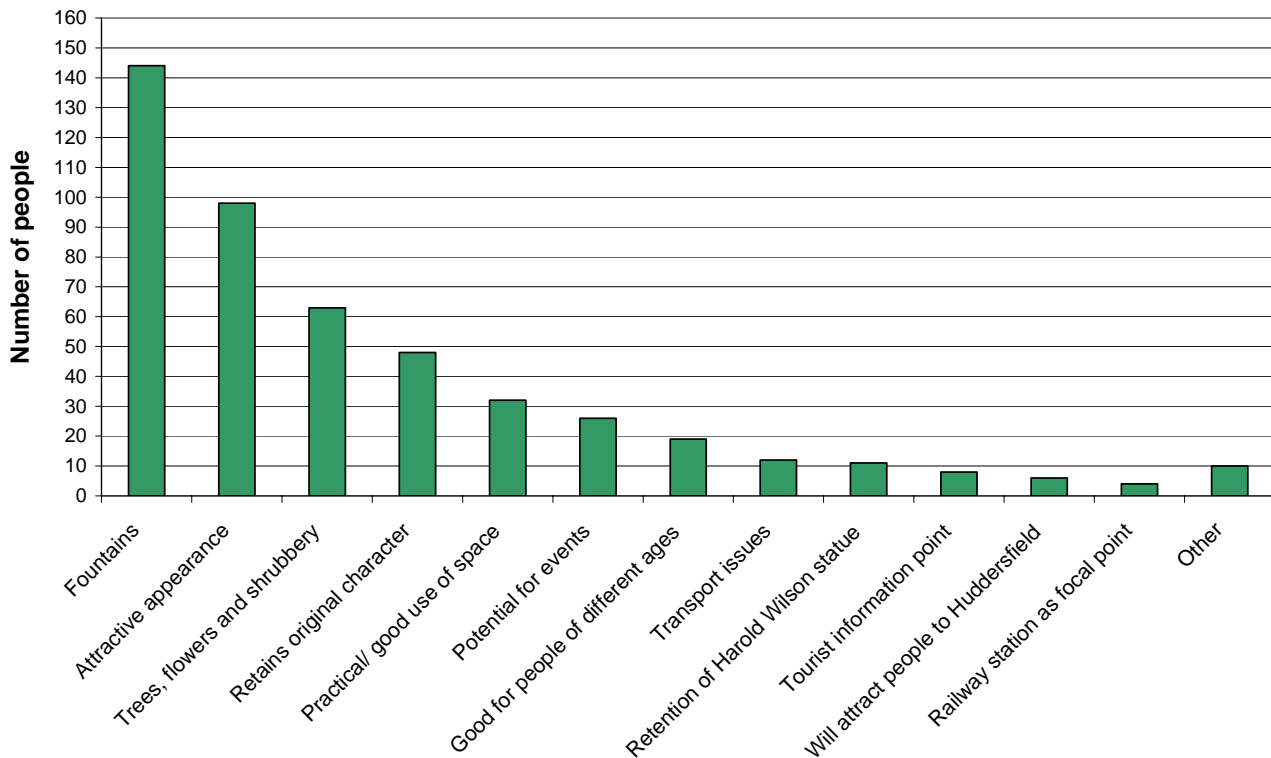
-
- The most popular option was Option One, which is a classical design that is contemporary in detailing and style. 1,642 people selected this design as their preferred option, which equates to 67% of all those providing feedback.
 - Option two, called Pennine Arrival, was the next popular option and 401 people selected it as their preferred design. This equates to 16% of all those providing feedback.
 - Option three, designed to promote the use of the Square as a contemporary venue for a diverse range of events, was the least popular option. 138 people selected it as their preferred design, which equates to just 6% of all those providing feedback.

3. OPINIONS ABOUT OPTION ONE

Positive feedback

3.1 The positive feedback about Option One has been categorised to identify which features were most popular. The results are presented in Figure 3.1¹.

FIGURE 3.1 FEATURES THAT ARE LIKED ABOUT OPTION ONE



3.2 The fountains received the most praise within the feedback and a number of people commented that they would be calming and an attractive focal point. The design’s attractive appearance was also frequently mentioned and was described as being: *beautiful, brilliant, relaxing, stylish, cosmopolitan, clean* and *aesthetically pleasing*. The inclusion of trees, flowers and shrubbery were also frequently praised:

- *The water feature looks modern and refreshing;*
- *It has human scale and allows for intimacy without diminishing present salient features;*
- *It will look good both in the day and night;*
- *Option one provides Huddersfield with greenery which our environment needs, but also give an updated edge to the culture of Huddersfield. The fountains will*

¹ Please note that this graph has a slightly different scale to the common scale used throughout the report. The reason is that many more people provided positive feedback about Option One compared to any other issue.

continuously entertain kids and adults alike as well as visitors;

- *I prefer option one to the other because it looks more relaxing and I would rather wait around a place like option one for my train.*

3.3 Another popular aspect of the design was that it is in keeping with the architectural character of existing buildings. Comments about this include: *the design shows great vision to unify the past with modernity and it is in keeping with the look required mixing the old with the new.*

3.4 People also felt the design made good use of the Square: *I like the feeling of spaciousness without there being too many open spaces.* The seating was mentioned by a number of people and some commented that this would encourage a *café culture*. There was also support for events that could be accommodated within the design and it was felt that this would benefit people of all ages:

- *It gives people something to look forward to with all the different events. It caters for adults and children;*
- *Option one represents a much more usable and inviting community space;*
- *A nice place to linger and spend time.*

3.5 There was also praise for the fact that the design is free from *traffic interruptions* and places *more focus on pedestrians*. The tourist information point was also praised as was the fact that the design retains the Harold Wilson statue. A number of people also commented that the revival of the Square would be beneficial to Huddersfield and would encourage more visitors and tourism.

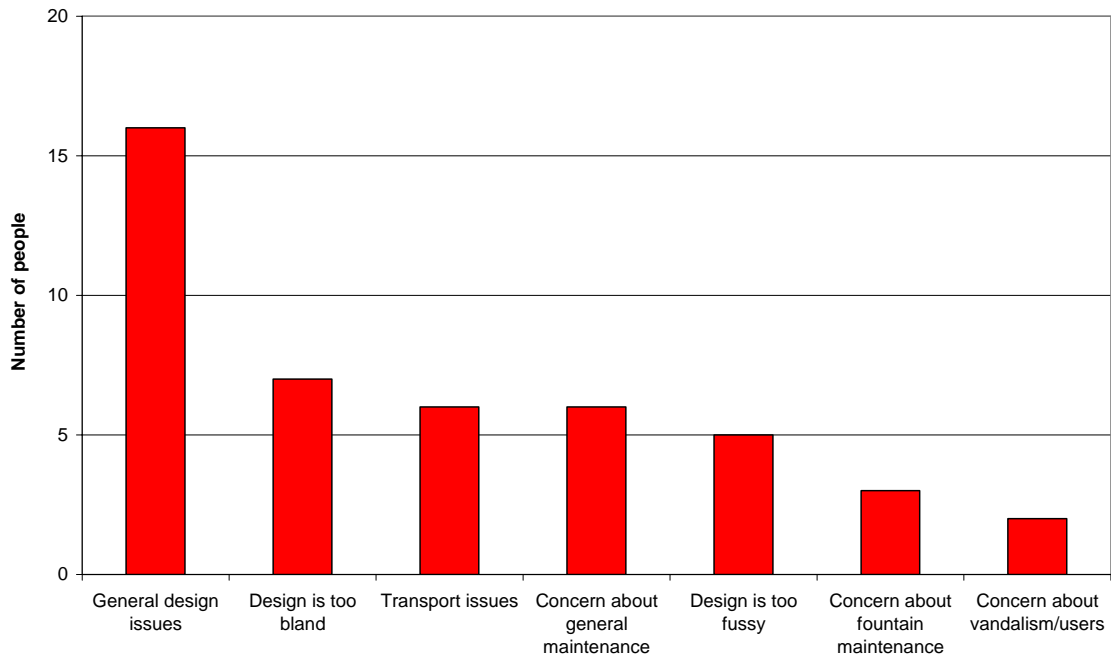
- *It will bring more people to the town and would help generate more business for small companies;*
- *It would make Huddersfield a nicer environment and it will also bring more tourists to Huddersfield's historic outlooks.*

3.6 A small number of people felt Option One would be safer than at present, with the lighting and restricted traffic flow. The use of natural-stone paving was also praised. Finally, one person commented that the design *makes the train station area look a lot nicer at night. If it is made nicer people will respect it and keep it clean and tidy.*

Negative feedback

3.7 Far fewer negative comments were received about the Option One design, compared to positive. A summary of them is presented in Figure 3.2.

FIGURE 3.2 FEATURES THAT ARE DISLIKED ABOUT OPTION ONE



3.8 A small number of people felt that the Option One design is too bland and mimics that in other cities:

- *Very non-descript - could be anywhere;*
- *Looks too commercial and unoriginal;*
- *Don't 'rip-off' the style of Leeds. Give Huddersfield its own personality.*

3.9 However, others felt the design is too cluttered and *fussy*:

- *Option one has some good design solutions, but feels too busy and limits the scope for events that could be held there;*
- *...not sure how the public fits in between the trees.*

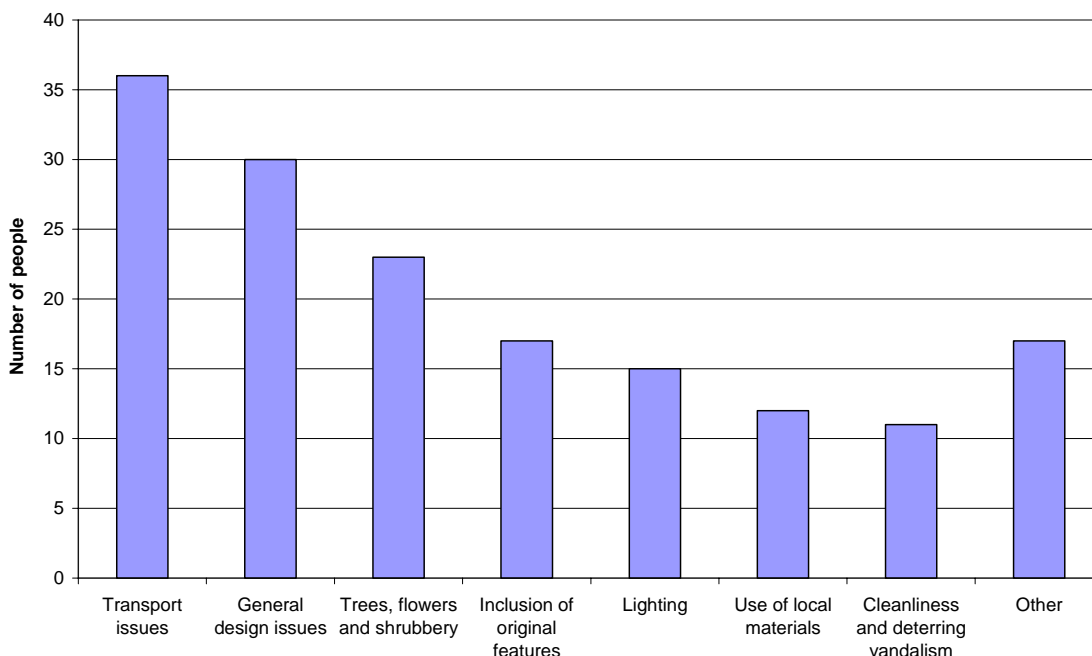
3.10 Other aspects of the design received criticism including the fountains which were described as *cold and bland* and *a waste of water*. One person thought there was too much paving and not enough trees and grass, however another felt *trees are not required – should be a nice open space*.

3.11 There were also conflicting opinions about the Harold Wilson statue: one person felt *we need to lose Harold* whilst another questioned *why move Sir Harold? He looks lost in the new location, heading nowhere...* The other criticisms about the design included *the lack of space for the Head of Steam and the Station Tavern to have tables outside* and the *café structure*.

Recommendations about how to improve the design

3.12 Figure 3.3 summarises the suggestions about how the Option One design could be improved.

FIGURE 3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE DESIGN



3.13 The most common recommendations related to transport issues. Taxis received most mention and feedback tended to seek less space for them, as it was felt they will *clutter the road, spoil the views, and interrupt the pedestrian flow*. Those who did not seek a reduction in space for taxis recommended that the *taxi areas need rethinking* and that the rank should be kept *as much out of sight as possible*.

3.14 Some feedback noted that the *station should have easy access* and there were a number of requests for a drop-off point and a small number of requests for short stay parking:

- *A pick-up/drop-off point which is easily accessible by car may need to be incorporated, especially for the disabled and elderly;*
- *A place for car-parking or 'drop-off' point would be terrific;*
- *Passengers are not always fit and many carry heavy cases – we need a drop-off/pick-up point near railway station;*
- *A lot of rail users are given a lift to and from the station. Trains are never on time and there needs to be a lot of 5- 10 minute parking spaces.*

3.15 Some feedback requested that the bus shelters are lit as shown in Option Two, whilst others felt the design would improve if there were no shelters at all. There was also a request for an easy link from the Square to the bus station and cycle storage.

3.16 The general design recommendations included suggestions about the fountain and

there was a request for a *quiet* fountain, recycled water and that in Option Three to be incorporated. There were also requests for outdoor cafés and it was felt this is *needed to give Huddersfield a more cosmopolitan feel, similar to that achieved in places like Leeds*. Other recommendations about the design included the inclusion of public art and additional seating.

3.17 The recommendations also included requests for additional lighting and some feedback suggested that the lighting in Option Two should be incorporated into the design. Feedback also recommended that original features are maintained, such as the cobbles and lighting and there was strong support for the use of local materials.

3.18 A number of recommendations were also made about trees, flowers and shrubbery. Most requested more trees or as *many trees, shrubs, flowers, and grass as possible*, however there were conflicting requests for fewer trees so that the architecture is not obscured:

- *Less trees so we can celebrate the most attractive architecture;*
- *Don't put up too many trees, the plan looks as if it could turn into a forest.*

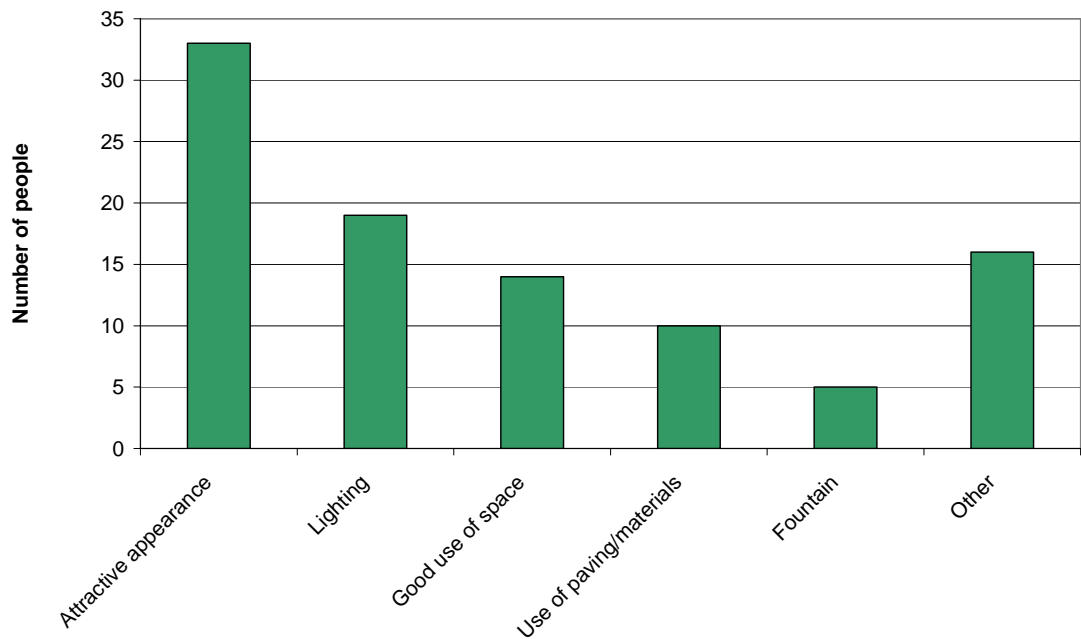
3.19 Finally, there were requests for litter bins, pavement finishes that are *easily cleanable of chewing gum and litter* and measures to deter vandalism. Some feedback also recommended that certain events be held in the Square (music festivals and fairgrounds) and that public toilets be introduced.

4. OPINIONS ABOUT OPTION TWO

4.1 Option Two was the second most popular design and 16% of all those giving feedback selected it as their preferred choice (401 people).

Positive feedback

FIGURE 4.1 FEATURES THAT ARE LIKED ABOUT OPTION TWO



4.2 The attractive appearance of the design was praised and described as *bold, imaginative and modern, strong, clean looking and modern and futuristic*. The LED lights received particular mention:

- *The LED lights are exciting. As well as being visually pleasing, they may come in useful when dragging a suitcase through the square at night!*
- *The LED lights and the "glowing bus-stops" are very intriguing and give a contemporary look to this up-and-coming town.*

4.3 A number of those who liked the design felt it makes the Square feel bigger and more open:

- *It's more open and airy;*
- *Option maximises the space;*
- *This provides the best open space of the three options.*

4.4 The fountain also received praise, as did the paving and use of granite:

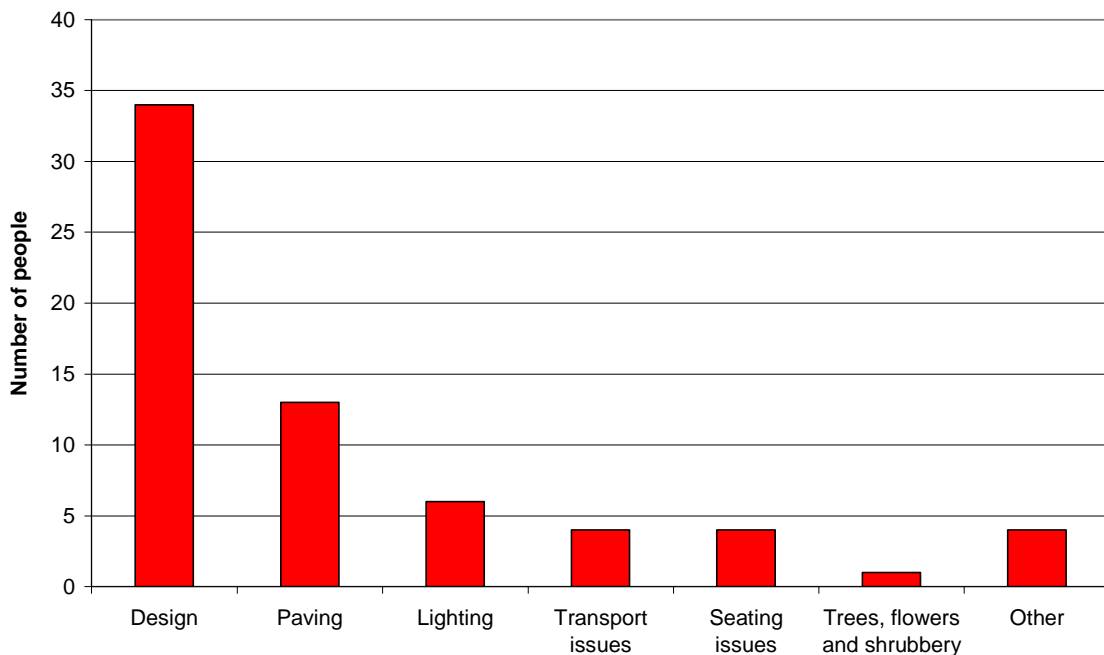
- *I think the railway-track paving enhances the area;*
- *Really like the idea of paving to represent that train-tracks; ties in very well with the overall area;*
- *I like the different surfaces and the rationale for this. It feels quite dynamic,*

which a 'transport hub' should be - all about getting people to and from places. It also looks like somewhere I would be happy to walk around late at night.

4.5 Other positive comments about Option Two were that it seems *people friendly* and a *safe environment*. The potential for events to be accommodated within the design was also praised and it was felt this would bring more people into Huddersfield and benefit the town.

Negative feedback

FIGURE 4.2 FEATURES THAT ARE DISLIKED ABOUT OPTION TWO



4.6 A number of people disliked the 'modern' and 'bold' design of Option Two and it was described as *bland in the day, too modern for context, bleak and ugly*. Other comments included:

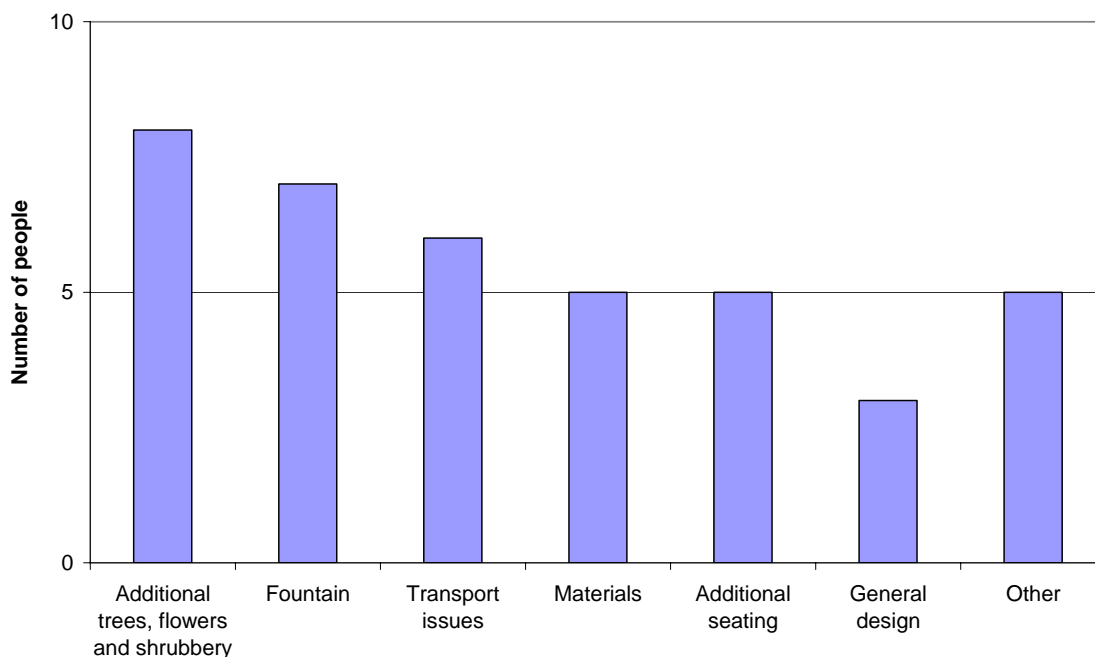
- *Too much emphasis on 'moving through', rather than enjoying being there;*
- *Too much change - too contemporary;*
- *Design is boring and too functional.*

4.7 The paving also received criticism for being *intrusive*. There was also concern about the lighting and some felt there was too much and that it would create light pollution and be costly to maintain. The access to the station was also criticised and some felt that the design did not incorporate adequate seating or enough trees, flowers and shrubbery. The presence of digital displays also received criticism.

Recommendations about how to improve the design

4.8 A small number of recommendations were made about how to improve the design of Option Two. These are summarised in Figure 4.3.

FIGURE 4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE DESIGN



- 4.9 The most common recommendation was to include additional trees, flowers and shrubbery. Additional fountains were also requested and a small number of people asked that the fountain in Option One be incorporated into the design.
- 4.10 Transport issues were also mentioned and there were requests for traffic to be kept to a minimum as well as changes to the taxi rank, which was said to *overwhelm the Square and block the views*. Recommendations also included drop-off points for rail passengers.
- 4.11 The other recommendations related to the use of materials - Yorkshire Stone was suggested as being *complimentary to the surrounding buildings* – additional seating, the inclusion of public toilets and the retention of the Harold Wilson statue.

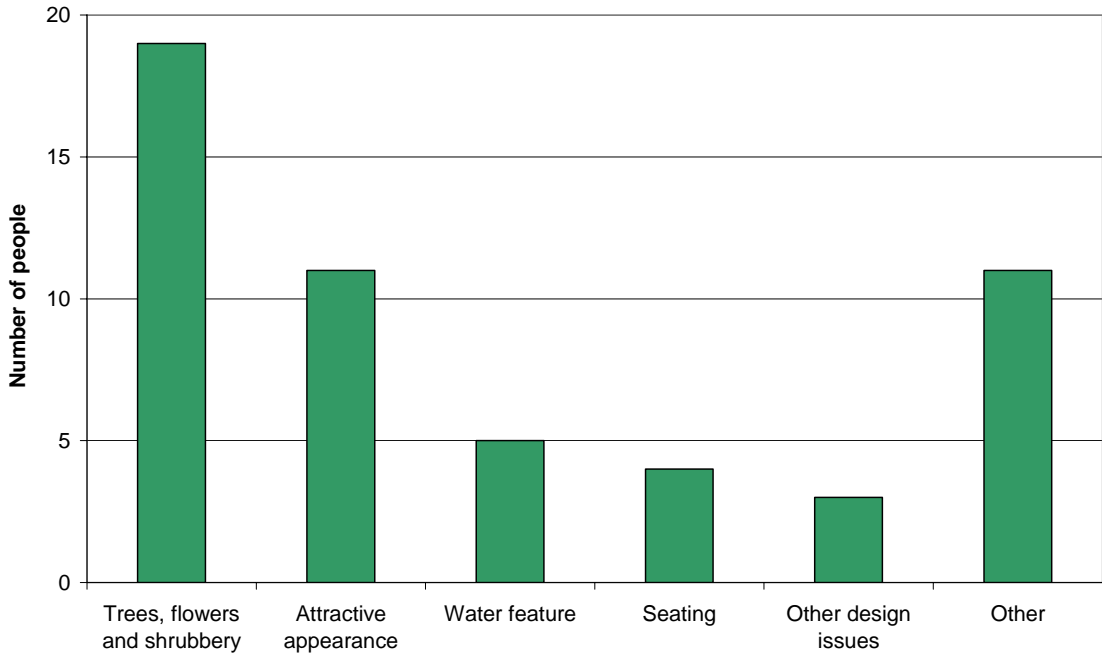
5. OPINIONS OF OPTION THREE

5.1 Option Three was the least popular design – just 6% (138 people) of all those providing feedback selected it as their favoured Option.

Positive comments about Option Three

5.2 The positive comments received about the design are shown in Figure 5.1.

FIGURE 5.1 FEATURES THAT ARE LIKED ABOUT OPTION THREE



5.3 The trees, flowers and shrubbery were the most popular aspects of the design: *trees add much needed green effect*. A number of comments stated that Option Three was an attractive design, which was described as *simple, usable* and *uncluttered*. The water feature also received praise as did the amount of seating:

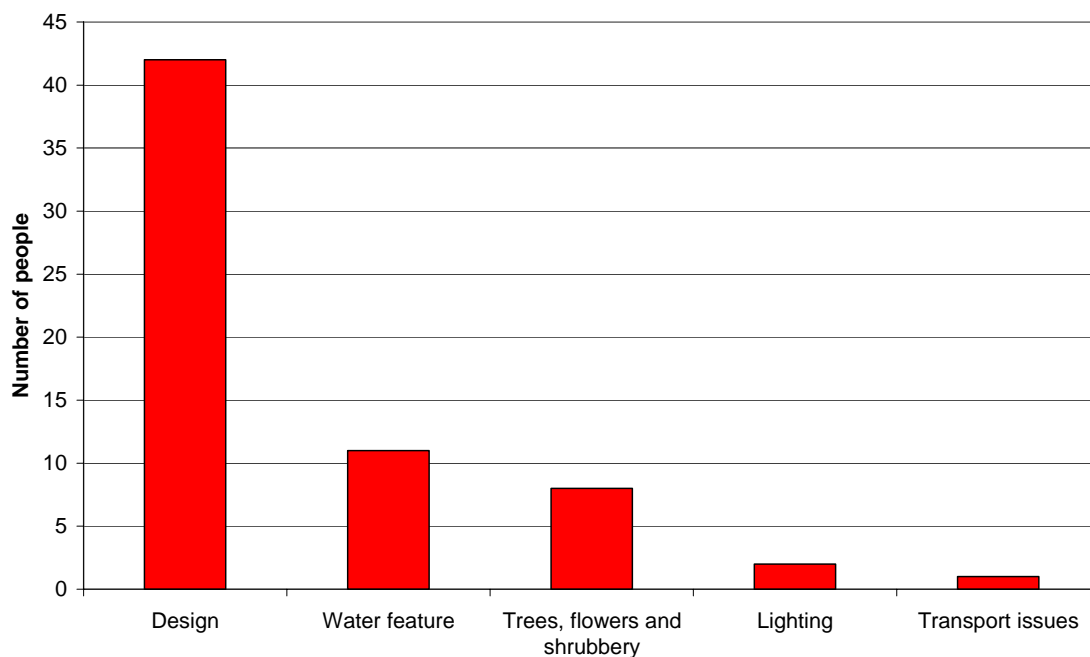
- *A more balanced design approach with just enough greenery and contemporary motifs to create an ambient area;*
- *Neat and tidy, easy to keep looking nice over time;*
- *The place needs more trees and greenery and nice places to sit.*

5.4 Other comments about Option Three welcomed its potential for events and pavement cafes.

Negative comments about Option Three

5.5 A summary of the negative comments received about Option Three is presented as Figure 5.2.

FIGURE 5.2 FEATURES THAT ARE DISLIKED ABOUT OPTION THREE



5.6 The most common dislikes related to the overall design which was described as *boring, plain, bleak, cold and uninviting*:

- *Would lack identity through most of the year;*
- *Not in-keeping with the character of the Square;*
- *Grey colouring looks cold. Looks as though it would be bare and feel empty when few people around;*
- *Too contemporary for location.*

5.7 The water feature was described as looking *old*, and *a waste of time*. The trees, flowers and shrubbery also received criticism and the majority stated that there were too many. It was felt this could obstruct the architecture in the Square, create personal safety issues and minimise the potential for large events:

- *Too many trees and slippery leaves;*
- *I find this proposal hard to understand. Are all those green bits on the left trees? If so how can this be an 'events space'? Not keen on so much foliage as a woman who often has to travel late at night - I like to see where I'm going and who is around;*
- *Events space is full of trees and bushes, how does that work?*

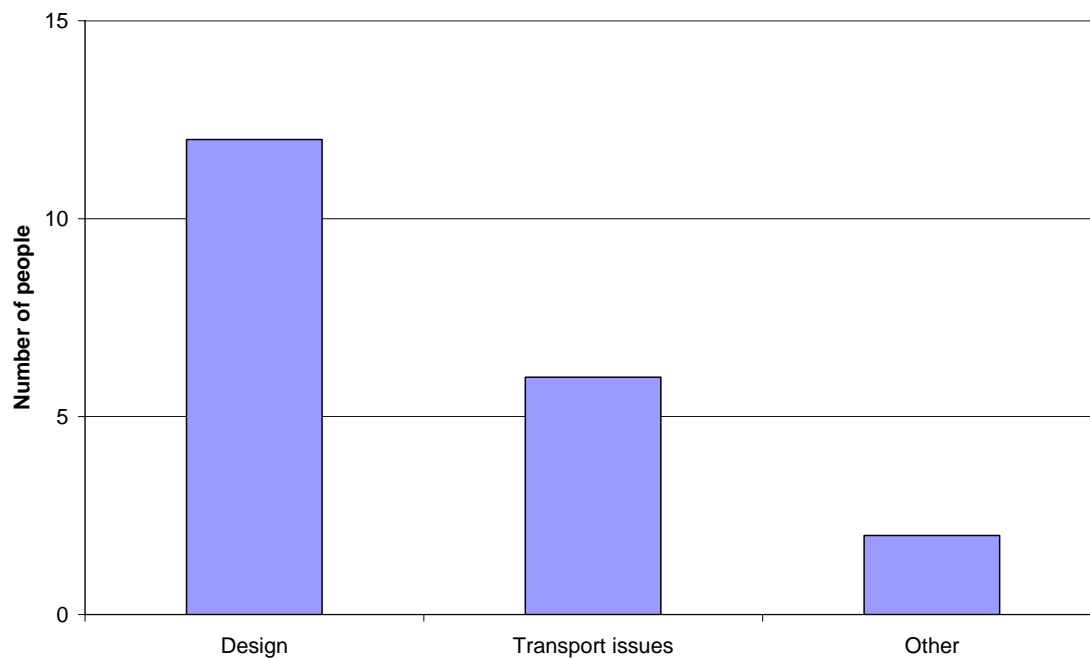
5.8 The lighting was also criticised as were the new bus stops.

Recommendations about how to improve the design

5.9 A small number of recommendations were made about how to improve Option Three. These included providing cycle parking and cycle routes to the station, enforcing rank parking for taxis and ensuring the taxis do not *detract from the overall effect of the*

Square's beauty.

FIGURE 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE DESIGN



- 5.10 The design recommendations included retaining the Harold Wilson statue, introducing a fountain such as that in Option One and having a *classical design* rather than a *'trendy' contemporary mistake*. Other art forms were also recommended as were public toilets and a suggestion was made that designers should look to Manchester for inspiration.

6. OTHER COMMENTS

6.1 This section summarises the remainder of the feedback that does not specifically relate to one of the three design options.

Development is not needed in St George's Square

6.2 A common suggestion was that St George's Square does not need re-development and that it would be a waste of money:

- *This is wholly unnecessary the square is currently very smart and serves its purpose;*
- *I can't see why the change is really needed or desirable;*
- *Leave it as it is! There are areas in much more need of regeneration.*

6.3 It was suggested that the money would be better spent roads, housing (including accommodation for older people), youth projects, the health service and other *urgent priorities*. There were more calls for the money to be spent on road improvements than anything else.

Transport issues

6.4 Transport was another area of concern and the feedback received about it was often conflicting. For example, a number of people felt the taxi ranks should be moved elsewhere as they are an *eyesore* and *there are too many taxis*, whilst others think *taxis provide air of safety by being present*.

6.5 Some feedback showed support for the idea of reducing traffic and making a pedestrian area, whilst others were concerned about vehicle access to the station and felt more parking is required:

- *The long stay station car park needs to be at least three times larger than it currently is;*
- *All the options make driving to the station to collect people harder. Improve vehicle access rather than hindering it;*
- *We need a traffic free space in such a wonderful location.*

6.6 There were also requests for more cycle parking at the railway station and conflicting views were raised about the buses. Some people felt bus stops would spoil the appearance of the Square, whilst others felt they were required as was improved access between the Square and the bus station.

Design issues

6.7 The feedback about general design issues covered the following:

- **Harold Wilson statue:** some felt the statue should remain whilst others felt it should be removed;
- **Options:** some recommended a combination of the options or features from each. The most commonly requested combination was Options One and Two;

-
- Fountain: some feedback requested additional fountains, whilst some felt there should be none at all. Some feedback expressed concern about the maintenance of a fountain and potential for vandalism. There were also requests for the old fountain to be restored;
 - Seating, litter bins and public toilets were also sought.

Cleanliness, maintenance and vandalism

6.8 Cleanliness, maintenance and vandalism arose as an issue and there were concerns that a re-developed Square would attract vandals. There were also concerns about scheme maintenance and whether there would be measures to deter littering and graffiti:

- *I've never seen a litter picker in the square;*
- *We need a long term strategy for discouraging pigeons, starlings, rats and skateboarders;*
- *I worry that any trees will be vandalised and cause the area to become run-down very quickly;*
- *..But if it is spoiled by chewing gum on the pavements, litter and graffiti, there is little point in doing it.*

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