

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ST IVES TOWN CENTRE
(Report by Head of Environmental Management,)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 St Ives Town Centre has been identified as being an area that required improvements due to its importance as a Town Centre area. There is a MTP scheme for £1080k in the programme to carry out these works between 2008 and 2010. A previous phase carried out improvements to the Bridge Street area. Phase 2 of the work is looking to improvements in the Market Hill area of the town centre. The whole purpose of the scheme is to ensure the continued economic prosperity of the town for future years by keeping it at a high standard of appearance and increasing footfall and reducing town centre traffic.
- 1.2 This report outlines the progress to date and the process required to take the scheme forward to construction

2. SUPPORTING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 A previous phase was carried out in 2001 following wide consultation in the Bridge Street / Crown Street area.
- 2.2 As part of the previous consultation, it was agreed that the second phase would be the Market Hill area. The district council supported this by including future monies in the capital programme.
- 2.3 Following the guidelines set by Cabinet, an Advisory Group has been set up for the scheme. This includes the local District and County Councillors, Town Council representatives, Scrutiny representatives and representatives from local consultative groups such as the Town Centre Initiative, Access Group and Civic Society. Meetings have been held since May 2006 with these groups to discuss the principle of the scheme and, more recently, detail of the design.

3. MARKET HILL ISSUES AND PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Market Hill, a large market square, regularly hosts a number of markets, including a charter market every Monday which takes over most of the space with stalls. There are safety issues with the present layout which could be improved with a new market layout.
- 3.2 Currently, the pavements are narrow for a town centre and, with stalls erected on them, this causes restrictions to pedestrian flow. Traffic surveys have shown that vehicles will often drive around market place looking for spaces rather than go direct to the off street car parks, where there is extensive parking provision.
- 3.3 The present layout of Market Hill has limited clear public open space and favours vehicles over pedestrians. Studies of semi-pedestrianisation of town centres have shown that this increase in pedestrian rights benefits both the economic vitality of towns and enhances the environment for shoppers. A St Ives specific study of the economy has not been carried out to assess the effect on varying degrees of pedestrianisation of the town. Several options were developed under the framework of the Advisory Groups over the last two years. These showed a range of options from

slight reduction in parking provision, to minimum parking with maximum pedestrianisation. Total pedestrianisation is not possible as there is one road and several accesses off the square which need to be kept available at all times.

3.4 The Advisory group agreed in autumn 2008 to take 3 options out to consultation. These options were;

Option1: a semi-pedestrianised scheme with the creation of a defined public open space outside three of the towns most notable buildings – the Free Church, Golden Lion and the Town Hall. A combination of Blue Badge / Public parking / loading is provided at the eastern end of the town centre. The scheme also proposed to move the War Memorial and Cromwell Statue into more prominent places in the open spaces.

Option 2: this has a similar road layout to Option 1 but provides extra parking for Blue Badge holders and delivery areas at the west end of Market Hill.

Option 3 is not to carry out any road layout changes, but just to enhance the existing street furniture, signage and surfacing.

3.5 The plans included in Annex A show the three options that went out for consultation.

4. BRIDGE STREET PROPOSALS

4.1 The consultation also considered the requirement for removal of loading bays from Bridge Street to allow for street cafes to be allowed. (Plan in Annex B) This consultation was required by the County council following a petition they received for Street cafes in Bridge Street. The following options were considered:-

- (1) to leave the order as it is at present;
- (2) to restrict the use of one loading bay at the south end of the street for a maximum of 8 hours to allow for street cafes
- (3) to restrict all loading bays for a maximum of 8 hours and move the disabled bay from the south end to the north end;

5. RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

5.1 The evaluation of the 638 returned questionnaires revealed the following:.

Those in favour of improvements to Market Hill	68%
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The results for preference of the options are:

In favour of Option 1	36%
In favour of Option 2	13%
In favour of Option 3	34%
In favour of none of the proposals	14%

5.2 For Bridge Street:

In favour of no change	42%
In favour of reductions	53%
Of these In favour of removing 1 loading bay	59%
In favour of removing all loading bays	42%

5.3 Full results of the survey are given in Annex C.

5.4 Written responses were also received from formal consultees. These are included Annex D

- 5.5 There were three alternative schemes submitted by groups / individuals which gave variations on the original options.

6 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

- 6.1 There is a majority of 68% in favour of improvements to the Market Hill.

The most favoured was Option 1 (36%) which will create the public square but by only a small majority. The next most popular was Option 3 (34%) – to do minimum.

The significant objection to those choosing Option 3 in particular was that they did not want the war memorial or Cromwell statue moved. However when you consider those that want Option 1, then 88% of them are happy for the memorials to be moved.

The Town Council at their planning committee in December did not support any of the options, but modified their response at their meeting of 17th March 2009.

SITI supported Option 1

Civic Society supported Option 3

Bridge Street – 53% support reduction of loading bays, with the majority of these for just one bay being removed.

- 6.2 Two meetings of the Advisory group have been held since the consultation closed, firstly to inform the groups of the results of the consultation, and then to receive their comments back on the results. These comments are included in Annex D. After consideration of the results, most groups agree that improvements are needed to the town centre but could not yet agree to a preferred layout. They have been made aware that any option needs to meet this Council's requirement to aid economic growth, the main requisite is to reduce car movements and increase pedestrianisation, and County's highways design requirements. The majority of the groups recommended that the scheme be delayed from its planned start date of January 2010 by 12 months because of the current economic climate. It is also clear that as a result of the effective nature of the consultation that there was a consensus that a design could be agreed if time was available for further considerations of economic and design aspects. Concerns were also expressed about a 2010 start due to the Towns 800 year celebrations that would be held throughout the town centre.
- 6.4 The results of the Bridge Street consultation needs to be passed to the County Council for them to take forward any amendments to the parking order regarding the loading bays and the disabled bays.

7. PROGRESSION OF THE SCHEME

- 7.1 Monies are presently available in the MTP for construction in 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 7.2 There is no clear majority for any of the three options, with a close split existing between options 1 and 3. It should be possible to produce a compromise scheme which meets some of the concerns raised, but meets the base criteria for the scheme. This would be taken forward under the guidance of the Advisory Group, and then with the approval of the Area Joint Committee, be consulted on regarding the required traffic regulations.
- 7.3 None of the partners have yet committed joint funding to this scheme, although the Town Council have indicated that they will support the scheme financially, but have not set a budget for this yet.
- 7.4 Because of delays that been experienced with the results of the consultation, there is a now a time constraint in actually starting on site in January 2010, as there will be a problem with meeting the Area Joint Committee cycle. Also under the present economic climate and the town's 800 year celebrations, it is considered by most parties that it is not the best time to carry out work in the town centre, and that the work should be deferred by 12 months.

- 7.5 There are several options that the Cabinet need to consider:
- 1 to stop all the design work on the scheme and not carry out any work in St Ives Town Centre.
 - 2 to carry out minimum improvements to the street furniture, signage and access requirements on the pavements. Pavement and road surface repairs would be the responsibility of the County Council.
 - 3 to choose the most favoured option, No 1, and proceed to the timescales previously set
 - 4 to defer the project by 12 months (or other as yet unspecified period) to allow time for the production of a scheme which meets the majority of the requirements of the interested parties.

8. CONCLUSION



- 8.1 St Ives town centre, like many other towns, is experiencing challenges in the retail sector. It is considered that investment in the town central area is needed to ensure its continued economic viability and also to improve the environment to make it a better shopping experience. In this Council's opinion, this requires reducing the traffic flows in the town centre and increasing the pedestrianised areas.
- 8.2 The results of the consultation show that a majority would like to see improvements to the area and that Option 1 is just the favoured option but not with any great majority. There have been objections for some areas of the business community and local residents to changes because of the economic climate and their perception that maximum car parking is required in the centre of the town.
- 8.3 Guidance is needed as to whether the scheme is taken forward, and if it is, the timescale that will now be adopted. These options are listed in para 7.5 above.

9. RECOMMENDATION

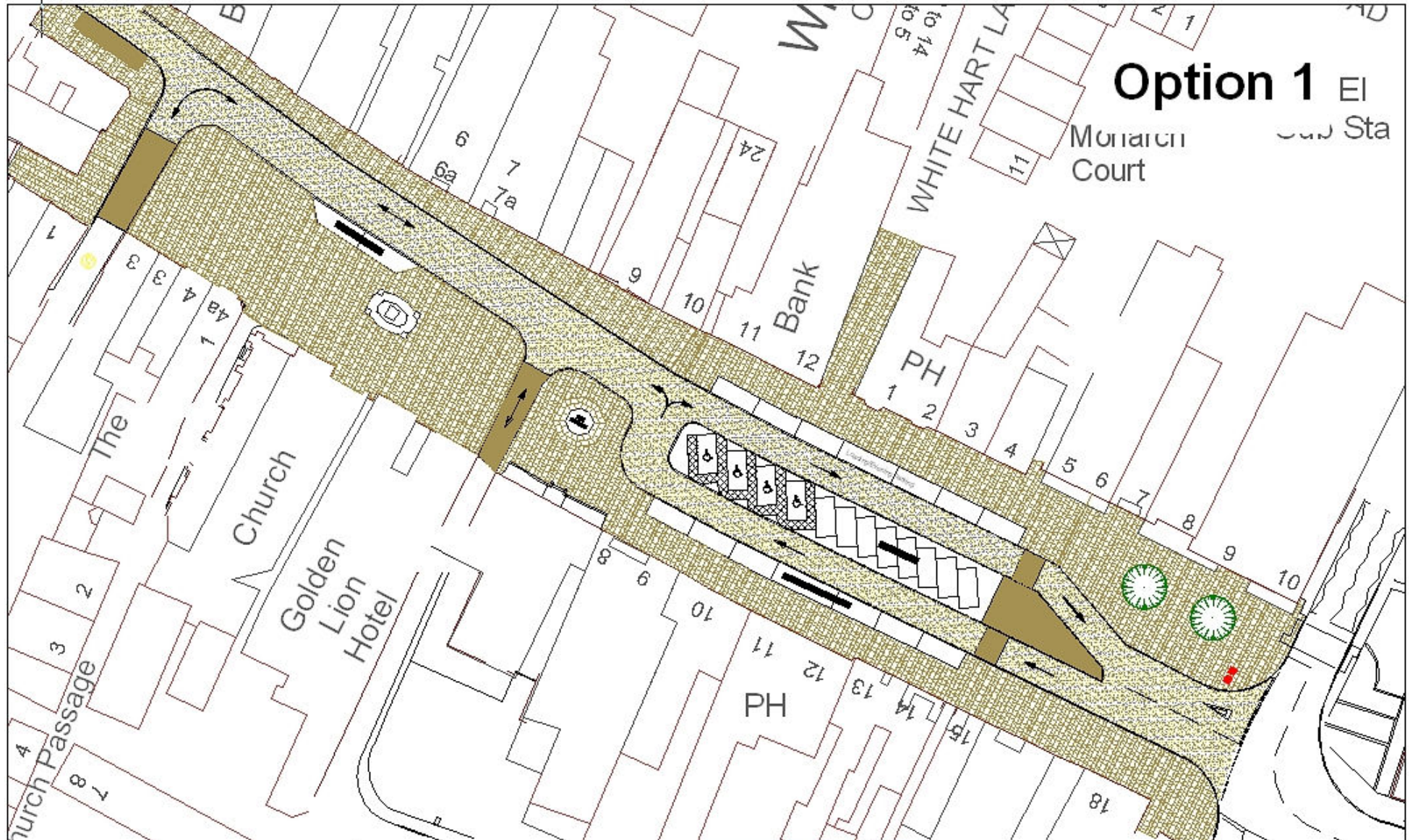
- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet–
- (1) note the progress of the scheme and the results of the consultation to date
 - (2) give guidance as to which of the options listed in para. 7.5 should be adopted to take the scheme forward.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Environmental Management Division files
Consultation documents and results

Contact Officer: **Dr P Jose, Head of Environmental Management**
 **01480 388332**
C Allen – Project and Assets Manager
 **01480 388380**

ANNEX A - MARKET HILL PROPOSALS - OPTION 1



Option 1 EI
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JOB
Environmental Improvements
Market Hill
St. Ives

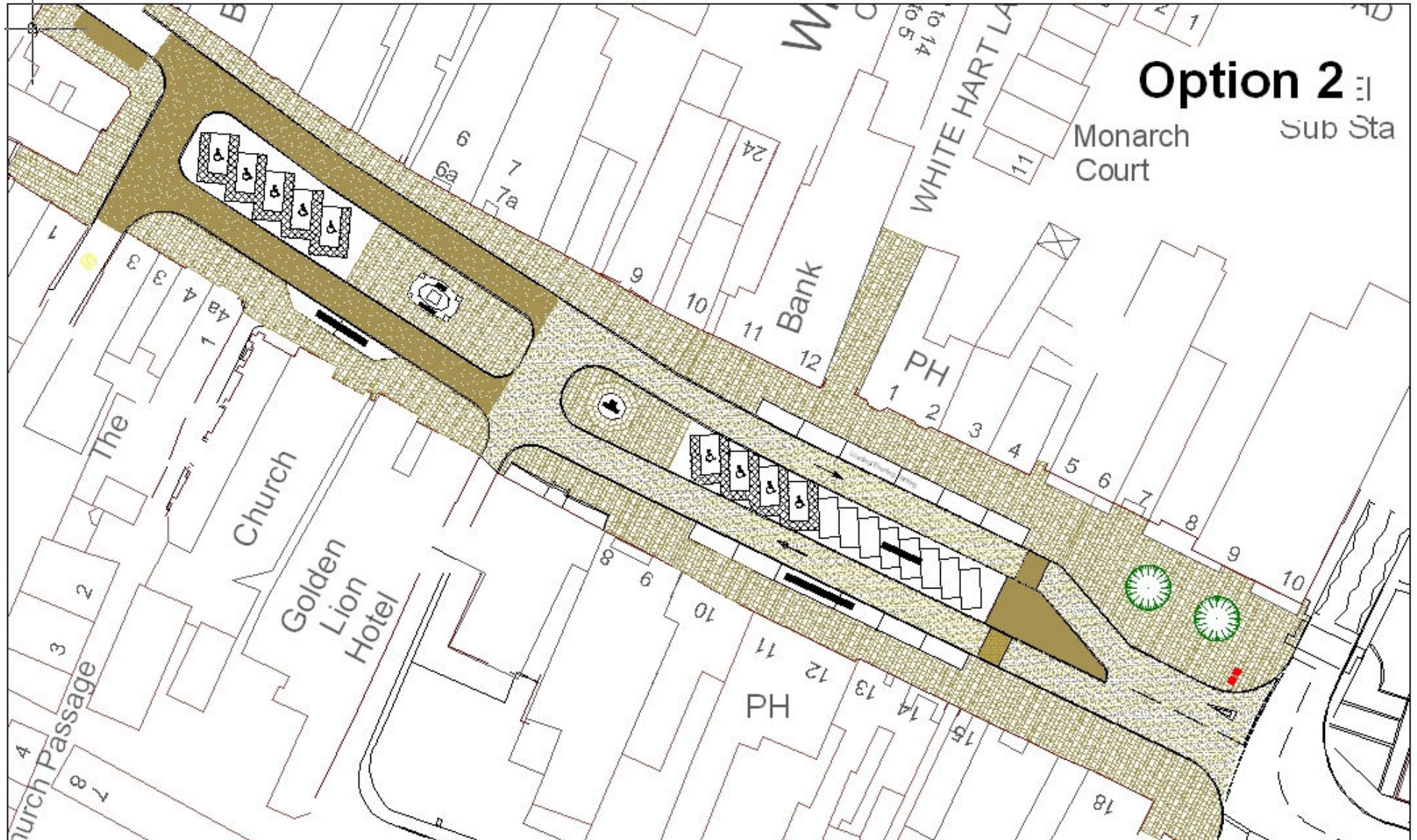
TITLE
Proposed Layout

Huntingdonshire
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HUNTINGDON, CAMBS. PE18 6TN
TELEPHONE: HUNTINGDON (01480) 388388

Chris Allen, B.Sc., CEng, Dip. RSA
Project Manager
Directorate of Operational Services

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DRG. No.		

ANNEX A - MARKET HILL PROPOSALS - OPTION 2



JOB
 Environmental Improvements
 Market Hill
 St.Ives

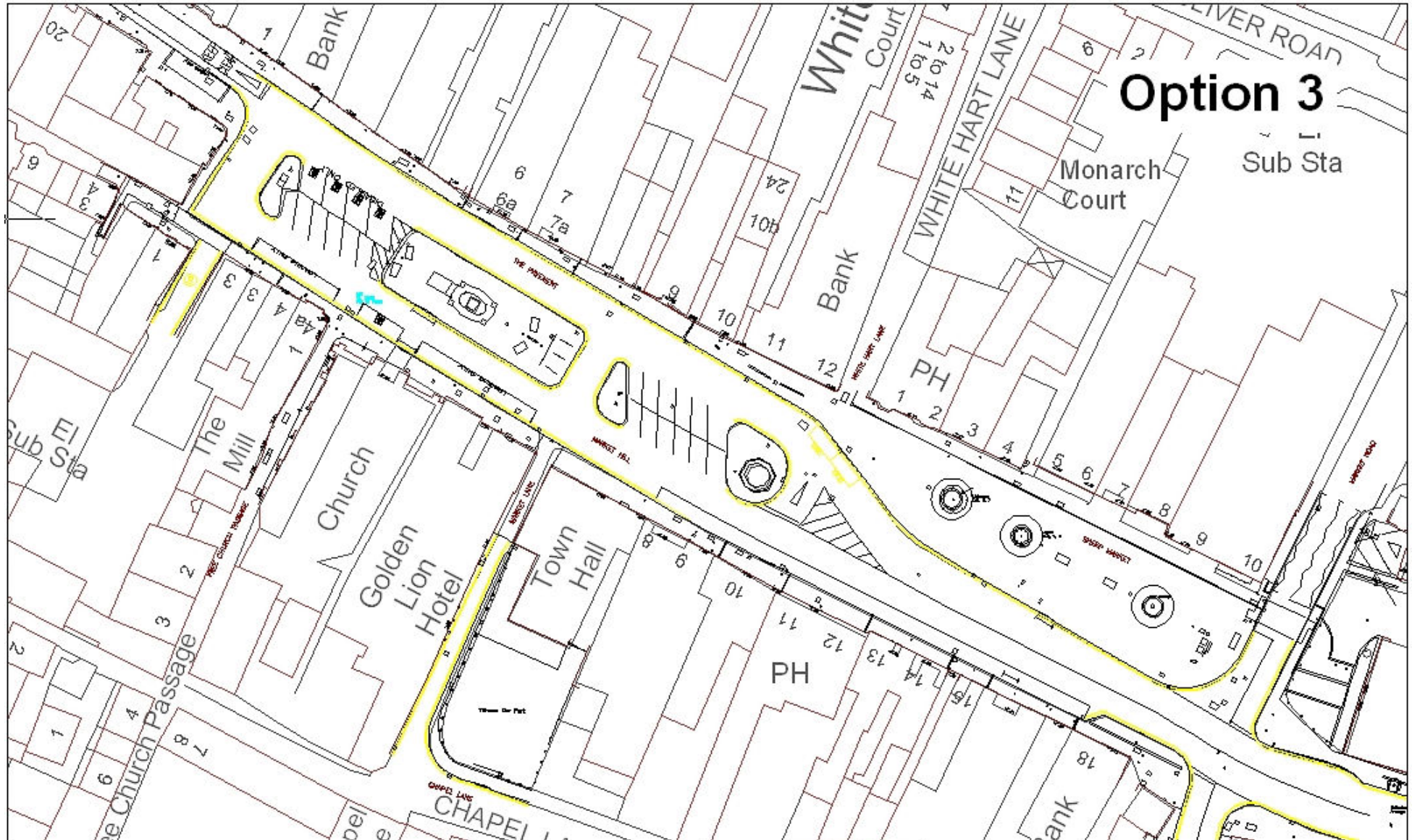
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ANNEX A - MARKET HILL PROPOSALS - OPTION 3



Option 3

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Environmental Improvements
Market Hill
St.Ives

TITLE
Existing Layout

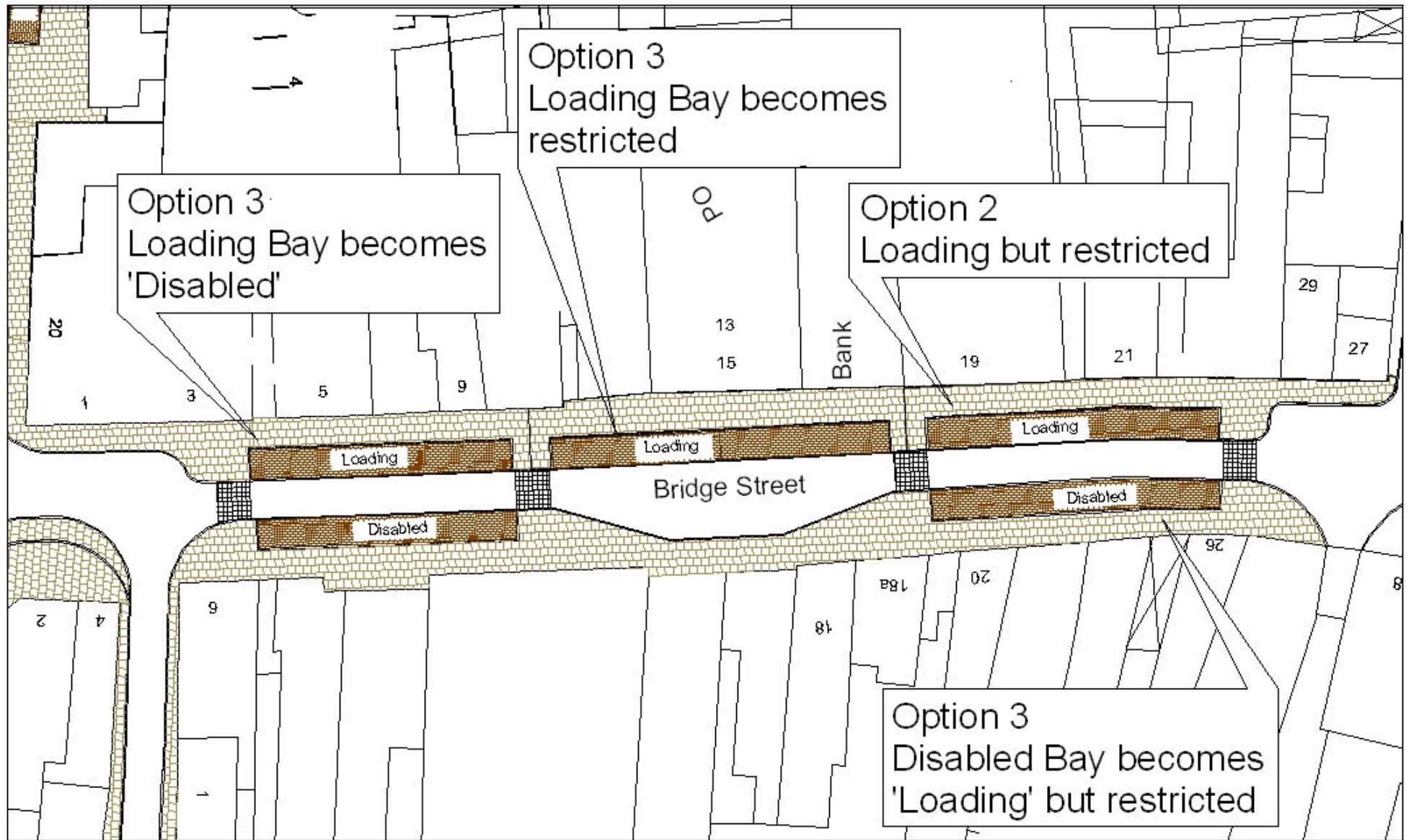


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ANNEX B – BRIDGE STREET PROPOSALS



<p>JOB</p> <p>Bridge Street</p>	<p>TITLE</p> <p>Proposed Layout</p>	 <p>PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST. MARY'S STREET HUNTINGDON, CAMBS. PE18 6TN TELEPHONE: HUNTINGDON: (01455) 388388</p>	<p>Chris Allen, B.Sc., C.Eng. Dip. RSA Project Manager Directorate of Operational Services</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>SCALE</td> <td>nts</td> <td>DATE</td> <td>May 07</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DRAWN BY</td> <td colspan="3">GW</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DRG. No.</td> <td colspan="3"></td> </tr> </table>	SCALE	nts	DATE	May 07	DRAWN BY	GW			DRG. No.			
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Annex C

Public Consultation – Questionnaire Responses

In total there were 638 responses

Question 1 – *Would you support further improvements in Market Hill ?*

Yes (431) – 68%

No (182) – 29%

Question 2 – *Would you like wider pavements ?*

Yes (385) – 60%

No (234) – 37%

Question 3 – *Would you agree that a public open space would enhance the Market Hill area ?*

Yes (332) – 52%

No (278) – 44%

Question 4 – *Do you feel an improved Market stall layout is required ?*

Yes (344) – 54%

No (265) – 42%

Question 5 – *Do you agree that both should be moved ?*

War Memorial **Yes (248) – 39%**

No (358) – 56%

Cromwell Statue **Yes (239) – 37%**

No (363) – 57%

Question 6 – *Which of the proposed options do you prefer ?*

Option 1 (227) – **36%**

Option 2 (84) – **13%**

Option 3 (218) – **34%**

None (93) – **14%**

Question 7 – *Do you think the balance between on-street parking is appropriate in:*

Option 1 – **Yes (194) 30%**

No (181) 28%

Option 2 – **Yes (84) 13%**

No (168) 26%

Option 3 – **Yes (228) 36%**

No (131) 21%

Question 8 – *Would you support such reductions in Bridge Street*

Yes (337) – 53%

No (266) – 42%

Of the ones that said yes

Remove one loading bay (199) **59%**

Remove all loading bays (103) **31%**

Annex D – Correspondence for Advisory group representatives



St. Ives → ACCESS GROUP

20, Willow Green

Needingworth

Cambs

PE27 4SW

Tel 01480 467091

Email sue.ferreira@virgin.net

15th March 2009.

Dr P José
Head of Environmental Management
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House

SIAG's comments on the St Ives Environmental Improvements

We feel the questionnaire was difficult to answer impartially. For example: if the response to changing of loading bays had been to have no loading bays would this really have happened? The same applies to Blue Badge Parking Bays. There seems little point in asking these questions when their provision is a necessity

Having said that, we feel it is time to move on in a positive and constructive way. We have submitted our own plan which encapsulates our views.

- Cromwell and the War Memorial should not be moved.
- There should be adequate Blue Badge Parking bearing in mind the current designated bays and the number of Badge Holders who currently have to park on yellow lines.
- There should be provision for loading and space for wedding and funeral cars to access the Free Church.
- All street furniture should be kept to a minimum though extra seating would be welcome. Do we need two phone boxes?
- The pavements need to be maintained to a high standard with regular dropped kerbs flush with the road.
- The open space outside Boots is well placed for sunshine. Why do we need another space?
- Extending and rationalising the whole central island to include Cromwell, the War Memorial and all the central parking spaces, as suggested in our plan, seems to us a more cost-effective solution.

We do not believe there is any reason to delay the work once the plan is agreed upon. There is an argument for starting it at a time when the shops are quiet. Once the economy improves the traders will be glad of the improvements. There is probably no perfect time for everyone but if the work is completed as quickly as possible the disruption could be minimised. If there is any question of delaying the start of the scheme it would be imperative that the financing be ring fenced to protect it for use only on this project.

The recent Town Centre Survey suggests that St Ives is a currently a vibrant and popular place to shop. Let us not destroy that.

Sue Ferreira

From St Ives Civic Society

13 March 2009

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ST. IVES TOWN CENTRE.

We have now had the opportunity to go through Chris Allen's recent report, consider the figures and formulate some ideas. The report asks groups to feed back their views at the meeting on 17 March; this letter is, in effect, a pre-view of what we will be suggesting next Tuesday.

Of those who replied to the questionnaire (not very many really) 68% supported improvements to Market Hill. The question was a bit like asking "Would you like more pay?"; almost certain to elicit a 'Yes' answer. The problems, in our view, start to arise with Questions 5 and 6. The numbers in your survey are significantly against moving the war memorial and Cromwell statue and without movement Options 1 and 2 lose a lot of their effect.

In gauging electors' support, we believe we could put Options 1 and 2 together and Options 3 and 'None of the Above' together. Options 1 and 2 both go for major structural change in the same area, with variations; Option 3 proposes almost no change and is very nearly 'do nothing'. In your survey the total numbers approving Options 1 or 2 was 311; the total numbers opting for Option 3 or None was also 311. It therefore appears that there is no significant majority support for Options 1 or 2 and that we should be looking at the whole scheme afresh.

The Civic Society therefore proposes deferring the project by a year provided the time gained is used for a major re-think of the scheme involving, *inter alia*, no movement of the war memorial or Cromwell statue.

In any revised scheme the following should be considered:

- a. The balance between the needs of market traders and static retailers.
- b. To provide wider pavements where possible.
- c. Extend pedestrian (public) space round the war memorial
- d. Provide a turning circle for large delivery lorries at the western end of Market Hill.
- e. Parking balance.
- f. Make more use of the 'sunny' area of Market Hill.
- g. To leave the town centre doing what it does best: to be an unchanged, un-made-over market town centre with a street market that straggles from one end to the other.

The Society would also suggest the use of two pedestrian crossings at the war memorial, not only as crossings but also for traffic calming in Market Hill.

Regarding Bridge Street, you will be aware from previous correspondence that for several years now the Civic Society's policy on pavement cafes has been to support and encourage any traders who wish to risk the vagaries of the British climate. If Bridge Street is to be made available for pavement cafes the sensible approach would appear to be to eliminate the loading and parking bays south of the entrance to Star Court (Noble's Yard) and south of Bull Lane, thus leaving the south end of Bridge Street available for pavement cafes.

(PHW ALLAN)
Secretary
Civic Society of St. Ives



Consultation on the St Ives Town Centre Environmental Improvements.

We have carefully considered at our board meetings the three proposals brought forward to us by Huntingdonshire District Council.

Having been involved in the consultation group since its inception we believe we have positively contributed towards it with regards to this scheme.

The second part of the consultation was regarding the proposed alterations to Bridge Street. We have been instrumental in bringing these forward originally as a petition called for by a number of our members.

Our choice of scheme to support at the time of the consultation was firmly for Option 1 and continues to be so.

SITI has considered the results of the public consultation extensively and would wish to make the following observations and comments.

Whilst our preferred option, Option 1, received the highest overall level of support we do not consider this high enough to emerge as a favorite from the consultation results.

There was a clear preference for at least something to be done to Market Hill and Bridge Street.

Option 2, in our opinion, fails to gain a great level of support.

We still feel that Option 3 fails to provide any clear benefits to the town. However, a large number of people who supported this option were of the opinion that the statue of Oliver Cromwell or the Cross of Sacrifice should not be moved. In fact this is a highly emotive issue in the town.

Having considered the report in great detail at a special meeting our considered response is that we still favour Option 1 but that consideration should be given to amending this to leave the memorials in situ.

We still fully support the Bridge Street proposals and hope that this implemented in the very near future.

We therefore strongly recommend that the present program be deferred to enable the District Council to bring forward these alternatives at a suitable time.

ST IVES TOWN COUNCIL

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TWINNED WITH STADTALLENDORF



Alison Melnyczuk
TOWN CLERK

23 February 2009

Dr Paul José
Head of Environmental Management
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House

By Email

Dear Paul

ST IVES ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

As you are aware following our recent conversation the Town Council was proposing to host a meeting of various group in the town that have a direct interest in the Environment Improvement Scheme. The purpose of the meeting was to try and identify common ground between the groups that could be presented to HDC at the next Liaison Meeting on 17th March. On Saturday 7 March that meeting took place and present were representatives from The Civic Society, SIT1, St Ives Business Forum and Members of the Town Council. Comments were also considered and taken into account from the Town Centre Residents Association and the St Ives Access Group who were unable to attend but wanted their views included.

All groups agreed that it would be impossible for everyone's requirements to be met but that change is required and those present outlined the individual views of their groups. Thereafter the various parts of the proposals were discussed in turn and the following general principals were agreed:

- Any work should be delayed for a year due to the current economic situation and to allow time for a scheme to be agreed.
- The War Memorial and Oliver Cromwell statue should remain in their current locations
- Wider pavements were desirable where existing pavements were narrow and to enable a ramp to be provided for the Town Hall.
- A new market stall layout was required to improve access to shops on market days
- Public space around the War Memorial should be increased to give this feature prominence
- It was noted that for the Monday market and other events the entire area was used as a public space
- Similar levels of parking should be provided
- Parking restrictions needed to be enforced
- The road junction at Market Hill / Station Road needed to be improved.
- Any scheme should have an impact statement on business
- Any scheme must consider and minimise disruption to traders during construction.

Other points raised during the discussion included:-

- Any improvements in St Ives Town centre would be undermined if out of town retail space and parking were allowed to expand
- The new Park & Ride site in St Ives would offer free parking, although CCC would take steps if too many St Ives shoppers used it.

- It was noted that all the proposed guided busway services would continue into St Ives bus station and onto Ramsey Road
- Improvement work was also need to the bus station area.

I have also been instructed to forward to you the comments made at the Town Council Planning Committee meeting held on 25 February at which time the results of the Consultation were considered, although please take into account some of these comments have been superseded by the points above:-

- It was felt that the results had, to some degree, been misinterpreted, particularly with regard to the re-siting of the statues and the claim that a majority had supported Option 1.
- Some concerns were expressed about inaccurate reporting in the press which intimated that local groups in the town would be required to find a solution.
- The Council might wish to reconsider its view on the number of parking bays in Bridge Street in the light of the high percentage in favour of removal of a single parking bay.
- There was some urgency in formulating a way forward. It was uncertain whether attendance at the Advisory Group meetings would be the best way and consideration ought to be given to meeting with other local groups and with the District Council officers separately.
- A basis exists to formulate a view and there are elements all the options could be used in this
- Seeing the responses from the various consultees would be useful to the Council in formulating a view.
- Postponement of the scheme for one year was an option which had been discussed at the first Advisory Group meeting and perhaps there was some validity in seeking this.
- There was some concern that the threat of losing the money for the project was once again being directed at the Council.

I trust the above is clear however, should you require clarification of any points prior to the next Advisory Group meeting please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Alison Melnyczuk
TOWN CLERK