

## 2 Background to the Proposed Project and Alternatives Considered

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### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the background to the Proposed Project namely, the need for the Proposed Project and how it evolved through relevant planning and transportation policy. The main strategic and design objectives of the Proposed Project are also outlined. Alternative designs considered through the design development are also outlined.

### 2.2 Background and Need for the Proposed Project

#### 2.2.1 Background

College Green has had a prominent role as a civic space going back to Viking Dublin when the Thingmount, where town meetings were held, was located on the river shore nearby (close to the present-day St Andrew's Church).

Traditionally the place where the Trinity College campus met with the life of the city, its prominence today comes from its connection between the civic route from Parnell Square along O'Connell Street and the east-west route along Dame Street to Christchurch. It is believed that in the 16th century College Green was cobbled. There were no kerbs, so the street surface running up to the edge of the buildings.

In the 18th century redevelopment by the Wide Street Commissioners turned it from an irregular junction into a significant public space, fronted by the impressive House of Lords (now Bank of Ireland) which housed Ireland's parliament until its abolition in 1800.

This imposing setting has been the backdrop to major events in Irish life, such as the famous public address by Michael Collins in 1922. The layout of College Green and the elegant backdrop provided by the Bank of Ireland created a naturally impressive stage for President Barack Obama in 2011.

#### 2.2.2 Need for the Proposed Project

The Proposed Project will transform College Green and redefine the area as a Civic Space of National importance in line with Dublin City Council's long standing objective for College Green. The Proposed Project will contribute to the achievement of the vision for College Green set out both in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 and the Heart of Dublin City Centre Public Realm Masterplan (Dublin City Council, 2016) for the City.

The Proposed Project plan for the city includes a specific objective to "*prioritise the redevelopment of College Green as a pedestrian friendly civic space, including the pedestrianisation of Foster Place.*"

This is in recognition of College Green's historic and architectural importance and its pivotal setting within the civic spine, the route running from Parnell Square through O'Connell Street, College Green and Dame Street to Christchurch Place.

College Green is identified as the City's potentially most important civic space in Dublin City's Public Realm Strategy 2012 – 'Your City, Your Space'. The strategy acknowledges that College Green has the potential to be a great civic space but is at present dominated by its traffic functions.

The introduction of Luas Cross City through the College Green area provides a catalyst for major transport change at College Green. The project, which is currently under construction, will involve two-way tram movement along Lower Grafton Street, replacing the current one way traffic movement.

The implementation of the Luas Cross City project opens the way for a complete redesign of the College Green area, including the removal of the many traffic management and signage infrastructure elements which currently clutter the area.

College Green is currently very congested with a high traffic volume of primarily bus and taxi currently passing through the area. The area is accessible only to public transport and taxis between the hours of 07:00-19:00 Monday to Friday with all traffic permitted outside these times.

In addition, approximately 6,500 cyclists and 75,000 pedestrians per day pass through College Green currently. The Proposed Project will ensure safe passage across this currently busy space.

## 2.3 Project Objectives

The Proposed Project has the potential to transform the College Green area through redefining the space and its use for the benefit of the citizens of, and visitors to Dublin. The following have been identified by Dublin City Council in its 'College Green Traffic Management Measures Public Consultation Document', April 2016 as objectives, and potential benefits of the Proposed Project:

- The space to be created can be used to meet the City Council's objective of creating a major civic space, presenting Dublin City Council with the opportunity to fulfil its policy and objectives in the creation of an improved public realm;
- Alleviate congestion in the area by barring all traffic travelling in an east-west direction across College Green;
- Transform the area of College Green into a more accessible and usable space by linking the Luas to a fully pedestrianised area;
- Provide an uninterrupted pedestrianised route from St. Stephen's Green to the quays, significantly improving pedestrian journey times;
- Provide cyclists with a designated cycle track which will physically separate the cyclist from Luas and bus movements; and
- The cycle provision in the plaza area will generate a key safe city centre link connecting to the cycle provisions planned for Dame Street and Westmoreland Street.



Option 3a	One-way cycle lanes, no bus stop - north side plaza - monuments relocated
Option 3b	One-way cycle lanes with single bus stop - north side plaza - monuments relocated
Option 4	One-way cycle tracks, island bus stop - north side plaza - monuments relocated
Option 5	One-way cycle tracks, plaza on south side of college green - monument locations retained
Option 6	No westbound buses, two-way cycling adjacent Luas tracks, tracks side by side at pinch point - monument locations retained - north side plaza
Option 6a	Two-way cyclists between tracks and two-way cyclists on southside of College Green - monument locations retained - no westbound buses - north side plaza
Option 6b	North and south bound Luas track sharing - north side plaza
Option 7	Reduced numbers of westbound buses, two-way cycletracks, tracks side by side at pinch point, low number of westbound buses - monuments relocated - north side plaza
Option 8	No westbound buses, westbound cyclists between tracks - monument locations retained north side plaza
Option 9	No westbound buses, westbound cyclists between tracks, Luas track adjusted to allow a wider lane for bus and cyclist - monument locations retained - north side plaza
Option 10	One way cycle lanes, bus lanes in both directions, northbound Luas tracks moved towards Grattan monument - monuments relocated - north side plaza
Option 11	One way cycle lanes & bus lanes in both directions with central island, monuments retained, northbound Luas moved towards Grattan monument
Option 12	Shared north side plaza, no buses eastbound or westbound, monument location retained

The options assessment process involved the consideration of a number of determining factors including: safety, pedestrians, cyclists, bus, Luas, public realm, and monument locations. Each of the options were ‘graded’ with respect to each of these factors in order to determine the most viable option for the public realm.

Following the options assessment, CSEA determined that Option 12 was the most viable public realm strategy option, for the following reasons:

- This option provides a full shared pedestrian / cyclist plaza at College Green with cyclists being fully segregated from both buses and Luas facilities;
- The removal of the need for a pedestrian crossing for northbound / southbound pedestrian movements allows for a much more comfortable pedestrian environment without any delay;
- With the provision of a full plaza at College Green, there is greater scope for streetscaping and civic space development. A full plaza could cater for civic ceremonies as well as providing a space for meeting, idling, appreciation of buildings and monuments etc. This option does not require relocation of the monuments so the existing symmetry of the space can be retained; and
- This option presents the possibility of reducing cycle time at traffic signals outside Trinity College, thus improving services for northbound / southbound buses and Luas as well as allowing for a more frequent pedestrian stage between the proposed plaza and Trinity College.

Option 12 of the public realm strategy alternatives was then further developed from architectural and traffic management perspectives to generate the Proposed Project.







with Thomas Davis positioned to west of the Four Angels fountain but in his traditional relationship looking east to Trinity College.

Version 3 was developed further into the finally adopted architectural design for the Proposed Project, with a detailed project description set out in Chapter 4.

During the development of Version 3, various options were explored on the basis of a number of specific issues to be addressed, including the following:

- Tree species, spacing and location;
- Types of surfacing to be used;
- Consideration of the removal of the railings at Bank of Ireland;
- Inclusion and number of the water jet fountains; and
- Relocation of statues.

These issues were then resolved into the final scheme design following discussions with the design team, various departments in DCC and other stakeholders.

## Alternative Cycle Movements Considered

The following alternatives to accommodate cycle movement through the area were considered during the design development process:

### 1. Cycle Route provision via alternative route through Temple Bar

A route was considered via Fleet Street, most likely connecting to Dame Street via Anglesea Street. This option was discarded for the following reasons:

- It would require the removal of historic setts through Temple Bar in order to provide an appropriate standard of surfacing for a cycle route;
- Cyclists would have to share with vehicles accessing Fleet Street car park;
- Pedestrians tend to walk on the road through Temple Bar and these would pose a further obstacle;
- The route is indirect and uphill to Dame Street, which would likely result in cyclists going through College Green plaza even if the route were designated through Temple Bar; and
- Cumulatively, the above would result in an unacceptable low Quality of Service for cyclists.

### 2. No cycle route provision

- The non-provision of a cycle route through the area would be contrary to the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan, which identifies the Dame Street to Westmoreland Street route as a 'primary route' [Route 11]. As such, it would contravene the NTA's policy – which is underpinned by the Development Plan and the NTA Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2016 - 2035 that a cycle route should be provided through this area. Furthermore, as no convenient alternative route exists, it would therefore be inevitable that cyclists would continue to traverse the space, even if no facility or permission were provided. As such, this is not considered to be a viable option and was discarded from further consideration.



