

ST PETER'S SQUARE, MANCHESTER, UK

Redesign of the square at the heart of the city



St Peter's Square before transformation, dominated by traffic and street clutter



artist's impression, part of the competition design



St Peter's Square 2017: water feature and raised planting bed forming a place to relax within the busy square

PREVIOUS STATE

Prior to the transformation, St Peter's Square existed as a void in the tissue of urban life despite its central location and magnificent public buildings. Transacted by streets and tramlines with raised platforms, the place was dominated by noise and emissions and cluttered with elements rather aiming to keep people out than inviting them in, forcing them to maneuver around instead of crossing at ease. Main views between the civic buildings and along Mosley Street corridor were as compromised as pedestrian desire lines, mainly by dense planting, monofunctional minor buildings, sculptures and street furniture. The listed structure of E. Luthyens' Cenotaph was directly abutting the tram platforms, preventing any ceremonies from being celebrated with dignity.

A major design decision besides banning the dominating traffic from the square and the relocation of the Cenotaph towards the north end was the removal of these barricading structures.

AIM OF THE INTERVENTION

Situated within an ensemble of listed buildings and structures like the Central Library, Old Town Hall and Town Hall Extension, the Cenotaph and St Peter's Cross, the square is linking important destinations into a new distinctive place. Integrating the new tramway's Second City Crossing and a major interchange tram stop, St Peter's Square forms a crucial link between major transformations ongoing in this area of the city. Today the square works as a catalyst for commercial progress and urban development in the future.

From the erection of the Cross in the location of the demolished St Peter's Church the square has its own history that extends beyond the existence of most of the buildings that are currently there and has suffered many transformations since.

The aim of the design is to reflect all this, and still create a unique and contemporary space while responding to today's concerns and opportunities.

The vision aims at establishing a square that is

- generous and de-cluttered
- characteristic throughout to recognise
- paying respect to history and the surrounding buildings
- inspiring and multifunctional
- open and accessible for all