

AtkinsRéalis



Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report

The City of Edinburgh Council

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ST ANDREW SQUARE PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, RIBA STAGE 3

Notice

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and structure of report

Targeted Stakeholder engagement has been undertaken by AtkinsRéalis on behalf of The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) to gain feedback on the RIBA Stage 3 proposals for St Andrew Square. Engagement was conducted through a series of stakeholder meetings held online via Microsoft Teams, providing an opportunity for key stakeholders to find out about the proposals, share their perspectives, and identify opportunities and potential concerns. The presentation slides and meeting minutes were issued following each meeting so that stakeholder groups could review the proposed design in more detail. Stakeholders were also invited to provide further feedback after the meetings, should they wish to do so.

This report provides a summary of the engagement activities undertaken throughout the project to date and presents the key themes and findings arising from the Stage 3 engagement. The feedback received has helped to identify areas of support, potential challenges, and opportunities for improvement, informing the ongoing design development.

Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2 – Project Overview:** Project background, timeline and summary of previous engagement
- **Chapter 3 – Stakeholder Activities:** Meeting schedule, attendance and key themes
- **Chapter 4 – Summary of Engagement:** Responses of each stakeholder meeting and influences on design
- **Chapter 5 – Next Steps:** Actions to take forward and next steps following engagement.

2. Project Overview

As part of CEC's City Centre Transformation programme, significant investment is being made across the city centre, including the proposed improvements to St Andrew Square and the eastern area of the First New Town. Over the past 20 years, St Andrew Square has transformed with investment to the central gardens in 2008, tram development and building redevelopment for retail, hospitality and offices.

Several major infrastructure and public realm projects are already underway or in development, including the transformation of George Street, the City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL), the George Street to Waverley Bridge (GSWB) Active Travel route. St Andrew Square is therefore a vital component to improving interconnectivity of the active travel network within the city centre. To complete this strategic link, design work has been progressing for the northern and western sides of the Square, alongside the development of a new 'operational plan' which will update the parking, loading and servicing strategy for the square.

Completing this work will enhance the attractiveness of St Andrew Square for everyone, ensuring that people can move around with ease and encouraging people to spend time in and around the square and within the various local businesses.



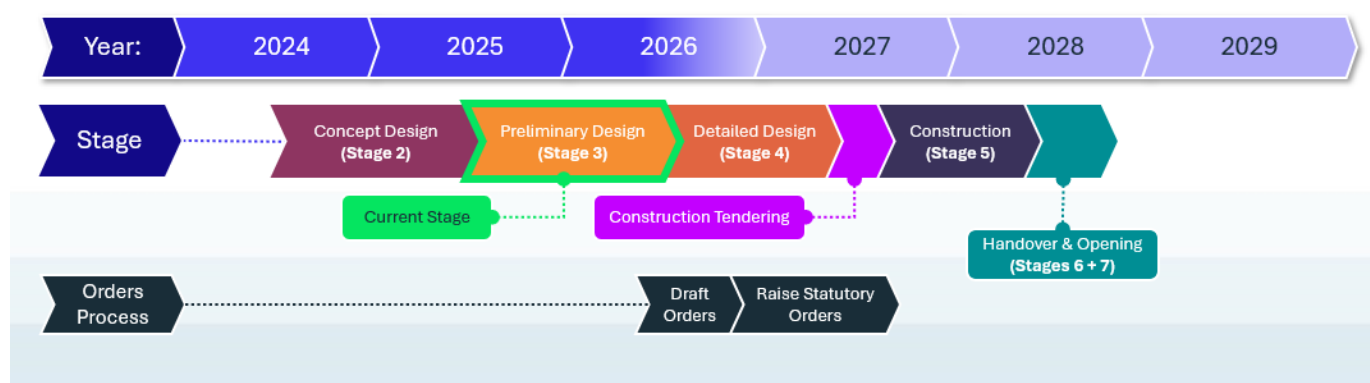
2.1 Project Timeline

The image below shows a schematic diagram of the overall programme for the delivery of the project including both the design and construction phases. The project is currently in the preliminary design stage (RIBA Stage 3) and is about spatially coordinating the design to its environmental constraints and ensuring constructability.

The programme for the design aspects of this current stage is up to the end of summer this year (2026), with the orders process commencing upon completion of this stage. The orders process will then run in parallel with the detailed design stage which is due to complete within the next 12-months.

Following the design stages, the project will go out to tender, and it is hoped that construction works will commence in September 2027, with a 6-month construction programme anticipated to complete in Spring 2028.

Figure 1: Outline Design and Construction Programme

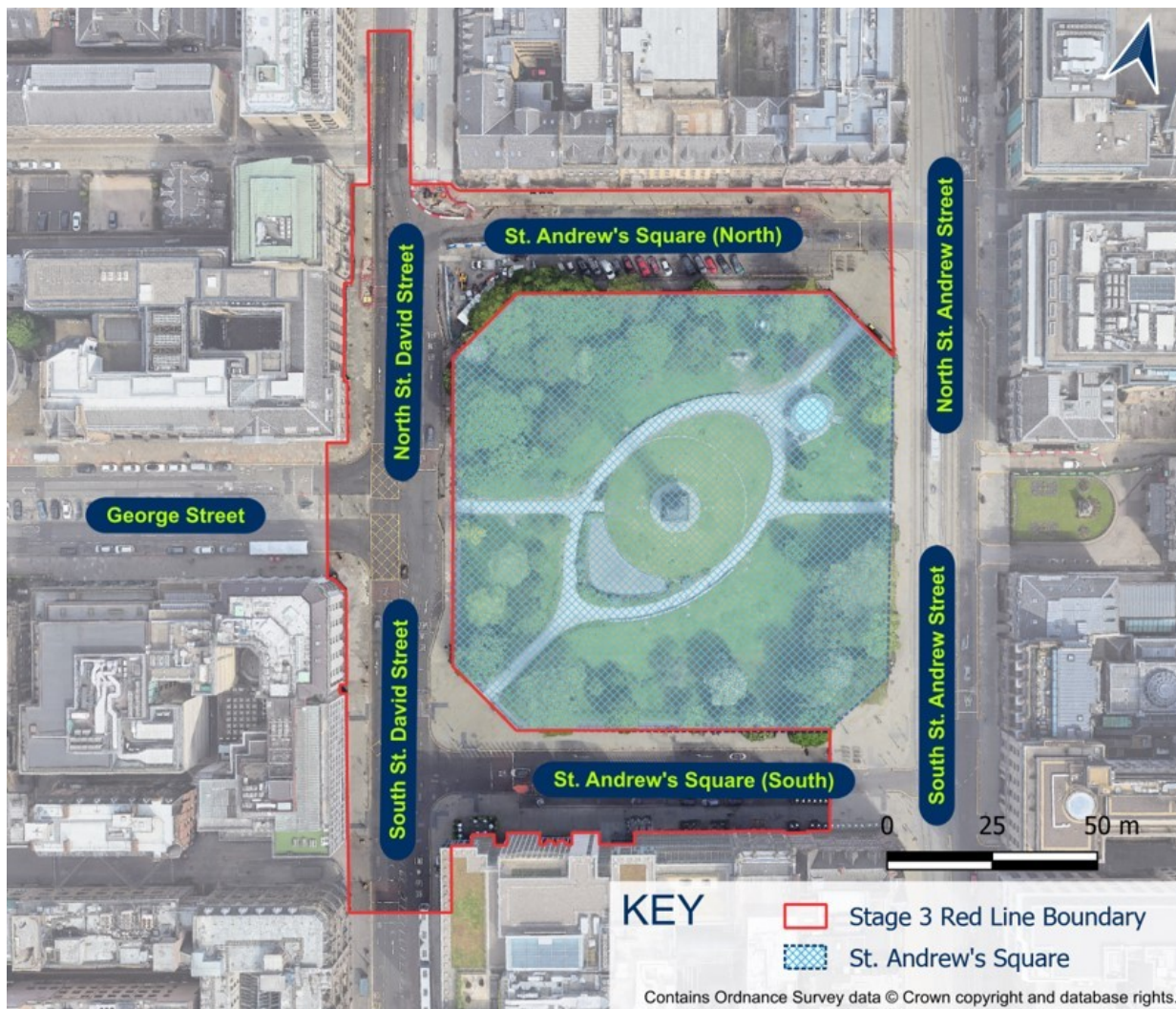


2.2 Project Area

The scheme extents are present in Figure 2. The study area includes the tie-in points to CEC's wider active travel network at the following junctions:

1. North St. David Street / George Street (GSNT);
2. North St. David Street / St Andrew's Square North (CCWEL);
3. South St. David Street / St. Andrew's Square South (Princes Street).

Figure 2: red line denotes the Project Red Line Boundary.



2.3 Summary of Previous Engagement

Stage 0-1 Stakeholder Engagement and Objective setting

During the early stages of the St Andrew Square project, AtkinsRéalis worked with CEC officers to establish a set of project objectives aligned with key council policies, including the City Centre Transformation Strategy, City Mobility Plan, and emerging climate resilience policies. These objectives were developed to guide the design process and form the basis of a future Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, enabling the project's success to be assessed through a range of transport, place-making, and sustainability indicators.

Stakeholder engagement during Stage 0-1 focused primarily on collaboration with CEC officers through a programme of site visits, workshops, and meetings held between February and May 2024. This included engagement with representatives from Active Travel, Place and Mobility, Road Safety, Planning, Public Transport, Heritage, Climate Resilience, Operations, and other relevant teams. Discussions explored existing challenges and opportunities within the study area, ongoing and planned developments, transport and movement considerations, heritage requirements, and climate adaptation priorities.

Two multidisciplinary workshops held in March 2024 provided an opportunity to identify key constraints, interdependencies and opportunities affecting the project area. Feedback gathered through these sessions, alongside site analysis work, helped refine the project objectives, inform the strategic direction of the project, and support the identification of stakeholders for future engagement. The outcomes of this early engagement have played an important role in shaping the development of the Stage 3 proposals and establishing a shared vision for the future of St Andrew Square and the eastern area of the First New Town.

Figure 3: Project Objectives

PEOPLE	PLACE	MOVEMENT
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE Increase the share of people who chose to travel actively and sustainably to and through the First New Town.	HERITAGE Increase the quality of the public realm, ensuring that changes respect and respond to the heritage values of the New Town.	INCREASE SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL Prioritise and dedicate street space to pedestrians, supporting sustainable modes of transport such as walking, wheeling, cycling, and taking the bus or tram over individual car use.
INCLUSIVITY Create attractive, inclusive spaces that support social interaction, prevent isolation and are safe for all.	STREETSCAPE Develop a unified, vibrant, and future-proof streetscape that is welcoming to people of all ages and abilities and encourages high footfall throughout the day and across the year.	ECONOMIC GROWTH Ensure project supports a thriving business environment and facilitates change in business operations so sustainable alternatives are known and considered feasible.



3. Stakeholder Activities

The Stage 3 design process for St Andrew Square has been further informed by a comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement taking place between May and June 2026. The project team undertook targeted engagement with a range of stakeholders including accessibility representatives, emergency services, business organisations, heritage bodies, taxi operators, public transport operators and cycling groups.

Engagement focussed on reviewing the emerging Stage 3 design proposals, identifying potential operational impacts and gathering stakeholder feedback to inform ongoing design development. Overall, stakeholders were broadly supportive of the project's objectives to improve pedestrian safety, active travel connectivity and public realm quality, while highlighting specific considerations relating to accessibility, transport operations, heritage, servicing and business access.

Stakeholder feedback has informed ongoing design development and will continue to be considered as the project progresses through detailed design and statutory processes.

Table 1 below lists the online stakeholder meetings and the high-level themes:

Table 1: Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Stakeholder Group	Date	Key Discussion Themes
Edinburgh Access Panel	25 May 2026	Accessibility, inclusive design, Blue Badge parking, floating bus stops, pedestrian and cycle interaction, surface materials.
Police Scotland & Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	1 June 2026	Emergency vehicle access, road safety, junction operation, traffic management and cyclist-pedestrian interactions.
Essential Edinburgh	2 June 2026	Business access, pedestrian movements, public realm improvements, internal garden accessibility and tour bus activity
Edinburgh World Heritage, Historic Environment Scotland & Royal Society of Edinburgh	10 June 2026	Heritage, materials palette, streetscape design, drainage, accessibility, utility placement and statue relocation
Taxi Operators (Central Taxis, City Cabs & AHCDCE)	15 June 2026	Traffic capacity, congestion, taxi operations, servicing, hotel access and passenger drop-off arrangements.
Spokes (The Lothian Cycle Campaign)	18 June 2026	Cycle connectivity, junction safety, wayfinding, tram interactions, construction impacts and inclusive cycle design.
Bus Operators & Edinburgh Bus Users Group	24 June 2026	Bus operations, tour bus provision, bus stop capacity, signal phasing and traffic management.
George Street Association (GSA) and New Town Broughton Community Council	02 July 2026	Project team attended the GSA meeting to deliver the project presentation and to answer questions from the group on the day. There were several questions around the intended operation of the square, the business impacts and the project programme.



4. Response to Engagement

Feedback received through workshops, meetings and internal design reviews has helped to identify key considerations relating to accessibility, public transport operations, active travel, heritage, business access and the overall user experience of the square. The project team has carefully considered this feedback and, where appropriate, has incorporated corresponding design developments or identified areas for further assessment as the design progresses.

Table 2 below summarises the principal themes raised by stakeholders and outlines how these have influenced the ongoing refinement of the Stage 3 design proposals

Table 2: Design Response

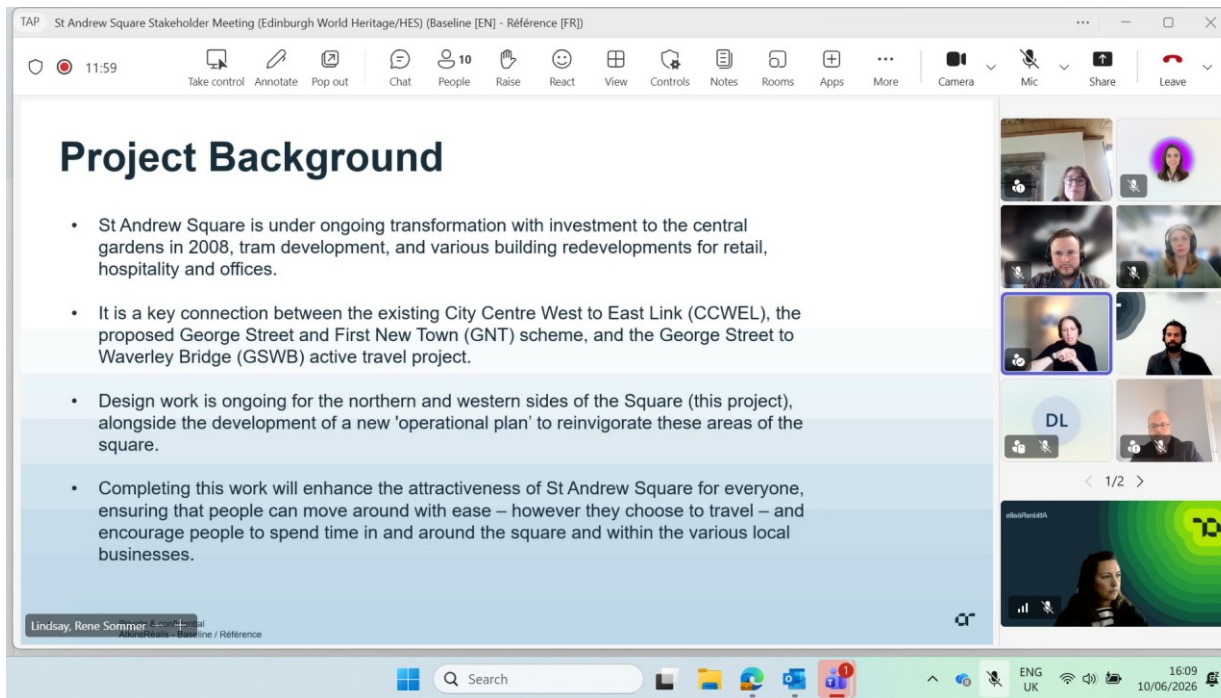
Stakeholder Group	Key Feedback Received	Design Response / Design Development
Edinburgh Access Panel	Requested clear segregation between cyclists and pedestrians, improved accessibility at crossings, dedicated Blue Badge parking provision, careful consideration of floating bus stop arrangements and accessible surface materials. Concerns were also raised regarding accessibility around the relocated James Clerk Maxwell statue.	The design increases the quantum of blue badge spaces and will reduce crossing lengths and upgrade the accessibility infrastructure (dropped kerb/tactile paving). The design development at Stage 4 will continue to consider accessibility requirements, including accessible surface materials and accessibility features associated with the proposed statue relocation.
Police Scotland & Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	Supported the scheme in principle but highlighted the need to maintain emergency vehicle access, manage junction blocking and ensure operational awareness of future network changes. Requested consideration of cyclist and pedestrian interactions and appropriate traffic management measures.	Ongoing traffic modelling and junction assessments will be undertaken to review lane arrangements and queue management. Emergency services will continue to be consulted throughout the statutory processes and detailed design stages.
Public Transport Operators & Edinburgh Bus Users Group	Raised concerns regarding the proposed reduction in the north-side bus stop length and its ability to accommodate tour bus operations. Highlighted the need for effective enforcement and consideration of bus operations, passenger access and interactions with active travel infrastructure	The operational requirements of tour buses and public transport services is being reviewed and will continue to develop through Stage 4. Signal phasing, bus stop provision and potential conflicts between buses and cyclists is being assessed at the conclusion of Stage 3.
Essential Edinburgh	Highlighted the importance of pedestrian movement through the gardens, maintaining business accessibility and improving the visitor experience. Suggested that opportunities should be explored to enhance internal paths, accessibility, lighting and public realm features within the square	The project team will continue engagement with local businesses and investigate the potential feasibility and funding opportunities for accessibility and public realm enhancements within the gardens, where these align with project scope and available resources.



Stakeholder Group	Key Feedback Received	Design Response / Design Development
Edinburgh World Heritage, Historic Environment Scotland & Royal Society of Edinburgh	Requested a consistent heritage-led approach to materials, drainage, cycle infrastructure, tactile paving and streetscape design. Emphasised minimising visual clutter and ensuring all interventions respect the character of the New Town World Heritage Site	The Stage 3 design has been developed with careful regard to the formal geometry and heritage setting of the square. A key design principle has been to avoid unnecessary visual clutter, irregularity or ad hoc interventions that could undermine the clarity of the New Town street pattern. Instead, the proposals seek to reinforce the established order of the square through straight-lined alignments, coherent kerb lines, consistent material treatments and a public realm layout that reads as a deliberate and integrated extension of the existing urban structure.
Taxi Operators	Raised concerns regarding traffic lane reductions, congestion, servicing arrangements and access for hotels, businesses and passengers with accessibility needs. Requested improvements to taxi rank management and enforcement	The project team has considered the potential for additional taxi rank spaces within the scheme extents to strengthen public accessibility to taxi services with cognisance to the changes in building uses around the square. Such additional provisions will be agreed and implemented within the design at Stage 4.
Spokes (The Lothian Cycle Campaign)	Supported the introduction of segregated cycling infrastructure and improved network connectivity. Requested improvements to cycle route continuity, wayfinding, junction safety, construction-stage cycling arrangements and provision for adapted cycles, handcycles and cargo bikes.	The Stage 4 design will assess wayfinding and temporary routes for during construction. Vehicle tracking and design checks have been undertaken to ensure accommodation of a wide range of cycle vehicles including tandem cycles and cargo bikes.



Figure 4: Image of Online Stakeholder meeting with Edinburgh World Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland



"I think the aspiration to restore sets and historic paving materials to the new town, it should be a long-term aspiration...."

Historic Environment Scotland

"I'd be concerned about introducing another different material because of maintenance issues"

Edinburgh World Heritage

"what happens during construction? Where do cyclists go in the meantime and how can we make it safe?"

"That's something that needs consideration"

Spokes Lothian Cycle Campaign



5. Next Steps

Following discussions with CEC and the Communications teams, it has been agreed that a formal online Consultation Hub is not required for the Stage 3 proposals. Instead, engagement activities will focus on sharing information about the proposed improvements to St Andrew Square and ensuring stakeholders are aware of the opportunities to provide feedback through the statutory Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and Redetermination Order (RDO) processes.

The next phase of engagement will therefore comprise:

- Development of a dedicated project webpage, hosted within the City Centre projects section of the City of Edinburgh Council website, providing information on the proposals and responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs). A project email address (CEC domain) will be set up to allow stakeholders and members of the public to send in comments / feedback.
- Targeted engagement with key stakeholders and local businesses to communicate the proposals and gather any final comments.
- Distribution of information to the local area (via a flyer drop), directing interested parties to the project webpage where they can review proposals and submit comments within a defined timeframe.
- Organisation of a business engagement session to update local businesses and provide an opportunity for discussion.
- Ongoing coordination with CEC regarding future integration of project information with the wider George Street programme, once greater clarity on programme updates is available.

Feedback received during this information-sharing phase will continue to support the project team's understanding of stakeholder views ahead of the statutory approval processes.



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