

CATHEDRAL SQUARE: COMPLETING GORDON CULLEN'S 'STONE AXIS'

■ The fen-edge city of Peterborough is currently populated by 160,000 people. This makes it substantially larger than either nearby Cambridge or Norwich, but with ambitious plans for growth over the next 25 years that figure could increase by approximately 45,000 people putting it on a par, in terms of population, with cities the size of Newcastle upon Tyne. As the city grows so too does the need to intensify its city centre and invigorate its public realm.

Over thirty years ago Gordon Cullen, the author of the hugely influential 'Townscape', noted in his study of Peterborough two key structural elements in the city centre's public realm. These are the north to south 'Green Axis' and the east to west 'Stone Axis' which connects many of the city's most impressive stone buildings. Following the completion of a public realm strategy for Peterborough's city centre, *LDA Design* was appointed in the summer of 2008 to implement the first phase of that strategy. The project, Cathedral Square, enabled a re-thinking of the key public space along Cullen's 'Stone Axis'.

The vision was to create an elegant, uncluttered pedestrian-focused space that would improve the setting of a number of fine historic buildings including the Cathedral Gatehouse, the Guildhall, and St John's Church. In turn, this would create a positive identity for the city centre. In a bold move, an existing eight-storey building - the Norwich Union - was demolished to open up the setting of St John's Church.

The square has been arranged so that with the removal of all road kerbs it reads as a simple wall-to-wall mat of stone with dramatic water features as its focus. In-ground water jets are arranged in two triangular groups responding to an important diagonal pedestrian route through the space. The jets can be controlled in a number of different ways to allow a variety of events to happen in the space. The project has transformed local business and more people spend time in the space with an increasing number of families using it. It sets the scene for the wider renewal of the city centre.

CATHEDRAL SQUARE

SCHEME
Cathedral Square

CLIENT
Opportunity Peterborough

LOCATION
Peterborough

PARTNERS
Lighting Designer: Sutton Vane Associates
Accessibility Consultant: Centre for Accessible Environments

BUDGET
£6 Million

AREA
0.7 Hectares

SCHEDULE
2008-2010

- 1 THE VIEW ACROSS CATHEDRAL SQUARE TOWARDS THE GUILDHALL
- 2 CONSULTATION MODEL OF THE SCHEME
- 3 WATER HAS HELPED INTRODUCE VIBRANCY AND FUN INTO THE SPACE
- 4 THE SQUARE HAS CREATED A NEW SETTING FOR THE SURROUNDING HISTORIC BUILDINGS
- 5 THE VIEW TOWARDS THE CATHEDRAL SHOWING BESPOKE SEATS IN THE FOREGROUND

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