Sustrans DIY Streets Kings Heath

High Street Design Proposals

January 2015

Please note: these proposals are still developing and are subject to continuing community engagement; they are not a finalised version.
What are we trying to do?

1. To improve Kings Heath High Street as a place where people want to spend time

2. To create a safer and more attractive environment for everyone

3. To encourage more ‘green travel’ on local journeys to and from the High Street
The DIY Streets Journey...
What you told us: Setting out the project brief

We asked you about the things that you wanted to change about the High Street. We then grouped this feedback into common themes which then helped us to create the community design brief, shaping the direction of the project and the specific things that we would focus on in the High Street design.
Design Concept

High Street Design Strategy

Strategic Themes

Gateway features
‘A sense of arrival into the High Street’ the character of the road changes to create a transition into a local centre. Making the street look and feel different to encourage a change in the way that different users interact with on another.

People places
Creating a coherent network of ‘people places’ along the High Street with reclamation and improvement of spaces. Increasing diversity of public life, places to spend time, opportunities to meet and gather.

Wider pavements
Rationalising layout of the street, realigning kerbines to create continuity, reclaiming some carriageway space in order to increase width and quality of pavements which have a very high footfall.

Easier to cross the street
Improved crossing facilities along the street to enable easier movement to and from attractions on either side of the street (shops, cafes, schools). Facilitating for the high informal criss cross movement along the street in between formal crossings. Providing coherent and continuous links along the Street to enhance character and sense of place.

A more attractive street
A safer, more attractive place for everyone which encourages people to spend time on the Street. Enhancing the quality of the street as a local centre with co-ordinated and coherent features to improve the streetscape. For example, greening, visitor signage, bike parking and seating.
Rebalancing Space on the High Street

Before

- High % of space for cars
- Lower % of space for people
- Few places to stop
- Narrow pavements
- Poor cycling conditions
- Difficult to cross the road
- More movement than place function
- Congested pavements

After

- More attractive place for all users
- More opportunities to stop
- Wider pavements
- Easier to cross the street
- Safer space for cycling
- Higher place function as local centre
- Space for public realm improvements

Re-balanced space: How could it look?
Prominent entrance signage, greening, speed limit change as part of Northern gateway signify arrival into Kings Heath local centre, encourage a change in driver behaviour and enhance sense of place.

Street trees green the Northern approach to the High Street, help to enhance quality of place and emphasise the Gateway. Creating greened walkways.

Reclaiming a large area of ‘dead space’ outside the library to create people space to provide opportunities to sit and spend time. Opportunities for greening, seating, art, translating library into street as well as improving pedestrian links.

Median crossing strip down the centre of the street reduces carry capacity while without reducing carrying capacity of the road for traffic. It provides informal crossing reserve and reduces severance enabling people to move across the street more easily.

Example: Informal median crossing strip

Hornchurch, London Borough of Havering: Visual narrowing and informal crossing reserve
Informal pedestrian priority crossings at side streets to enable people to cross more easily as well as providing continuity to the street. All informal crossings should have the same materials to ensure consistency and stronger character.

Example: Raised pedestrian priority side street crossings

Walworth Road, London. Informal raised side street crossings.

Raised informal crossings at key points on the street which have very high amounts of informal cross movements e.g. York to Heathfield Road.

Examples: Informal raised crossings/ Street greening

Colmore Row, Birmingham City Centre. Pedestrian priority

Walworth Road, Kensington High Street, London. Extensive tree planting to green the street and enhance sense of place.
Gateway tree planting along the approaches to the High Street to green, create tree lined walkways and enhance sense of arrival at the local centre. This echoes the features at the Northern gateway and provides coherence and continuity between North and South entrances. The median strip also provides a linking element along the street, visually narrowing and providing an informal crossing reserve in between pedestrian crossings.

Southern gateway feature on the approach to the High Street, signifies entry into a different local centre environment. Echoes raised entry treatment and tree planting of the Northern Gateway (by KH Library). Changes in the character of the street are also enhanced with median crossing strip. Gateways will also be further emphasised by speed limit changes and welcome signage, the sense that “you have arrived in Kings Heath”. Character of the street to change to help emphasise “a people place” where you can expect lots of people crossing, cycling, walking about, children on school journeys, shops and businesses.

“Active and well managed use of retail forecourt areas attract people, reduce the perception of vehicle dominance and signal to the driver to slow down.” (UDL) Increasing kerbside activity such as people on foot, shopping, temporary cafe spaces help to create more balanced people spaces and a more pleasant environment to spend time.

“The presence of market stalls, temporary street activities, cafe seating at the side of the street can alert drivers to reduce their speed significantly and take care of the pedestrians, shoppers and stall holders.” (UDL)
A more attractive High Street

Visitor Signage

Enhancing the Streetscape

Improving visitor experience with coordinated street signage to give people more information about nearby facilities, making it easier to navigate the local centre. Enhancing ‘place’ value and legibility of Kings Heath.

Parking signage strategy to signpost visitors to nearby car parking facilities on the High Street. There are off street parking facilities but they are currently poorly signed and many people are unaware of their location such as Silver Street and Institute Road. An overall strategy to avoid cluttering is important and address the areas where cluttering is an issue at the moment.

Placing, particularly street trees, helps to soften the street scene while creating visual interest, improving microclimate, increases quality of the public realm, provides continuity, and provides a softer boundary between the pavement and the road as well as providing a habitat in the urban area for wildlife.

Seating is necessary to provide rest points for pedestrians, particularly those with mobility impairments, and extra seating should be considered where people congregate, such as shops and key points along the High Street.

Greened walkways with integrated seating opportunities improve user experience as well as providing elements of sustainable urban drainage. E.g. Parade/Kingsway frontage.

Coordinated street furniture that encourages human activity can also contribute to a sense of place, but should not create clutter or affect pedestrian movement along/ across the street.

All key destinations on the High Street should be served by adequate cycle parking provision that can accommodate employees, customers, residents and visitors.

Increasing diversity of kerbside activity that can take place and variety of public life to enhance the place value of the High Street.

Planting, particularly street trees, helps to soften the street scene while creating visual interest, improving microclimate, increases quality of the public realm, provides continuity, and provides a softer boundary between the pavement and the road as well as providing a habitat in the urban area for wildlife.

A more attractive High Street
What do you think?

For more information about the project or this stage of the emerging High Street Design please contact:

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