



DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

12 August 2026

Jon Mattingley
Transport Programme Team
Cardiff Council

Jon.Mattingley@cardiff.gov.uk

Dear Jon,

Re: Kingsway Public Realm Improvements

Thank you for providing the Design Commission for Wales with the opportunity to comment on the emerging proposals for the Kingsway Public Realm Improvements. Our attention was drawn to the proposals by the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust and the Victorian Society Wales group who raised their concerns about the proposals. We have undertaken a desktop review of the material available through the public consultation to provide our own independent feedback, which we will also provide to the above organisations.

Overall Approach

We support the overall strategic vision for improving sustainable transport connections between Cardiff and Newport. We are also supportive of the principle of the Kingsway proposals and their ambition to create a greener, more accessible and welcoming public space.

4th Llawr Adeiladau Cambrian
Sgwâr Mount Stuart
Caerdydd CF10 5FL

4th Floor Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FL

T 029 2045 1964
E connect@dcfw.org
dcfw.org

The proposals provide an important opportunity to reduce traffic dominance, strengthen connections between the city centre and Cathays Park, and create a space that supports a wider range of activities and users. Our comments identify areas where further development and testing could help fully realise these ambitions.

Traffic Management and Movement

We support the principle of removing the subway beneath Boulevard de Nantes and replacing it with a more accessible, visible and direct street-level crossing.

As Boulevard de Nantes will remain a significant road to cross, the crossing should be considered as an integral part of the wider proposals. We encourage the Council to test pedestrian and cycle waiting times, journey times and the overall comfort and accessibility of the route. Given the width of the road, it may also be helpful to explore whether a central island or staged crossing could provide a more comfortable option for some users without creating unnecessary delay.

There is also an opportunity to strengthen how the proposals connect with Greyfriars Road, Gorsedd Gardens Road and King Edward VII Avenue. An integrated approach to adjoining routes and crossings would help ensure that the benefits extend beyond the immediate Kingsway boundary.

It would be useful to understand how expected pedestrian and cycle movements have informed the design of the shared route, including how potential conflicts between users have been assessed. The relationship with adjoining streets, roads, cycle lanes, bus stops, passenger waiting areas and motorcycle parking should also all be considered as part of the overall movement strategy.

Public Realm

The proposals should aim to create a successful public space as well as an attractive movement route. Further consideration could be given to how the design responds to surrounding buildings and uses, where spill-out activity could occur, and what would encourage people to stop and spend time in the space.

The material refers to events and temporary activities, but it would be helpful to show more clearly how these could be accommodated. This could include identifying suitable locations for events, markets and kiosks, alongside servicing, power, water and management requirements. The wider aspirations for a Cultural Quarter within Cathays Park may also provide useful context for the design and future use of the space.

The comfort of the space in different weather conditions should inform the design and choice of materials, planting and seating. This includes shade, shelter from rain and wind, opportunities for cooling, and the heat-retention and reflective properties of materials.

We also encourage the Council to explore opportunities to retain healthy existing trees and reuse existing paving or other materials where appropriate. Further detail on the planting strategy would be helpful, including its robustness, sensory qualities, climatic performance and long-term maintenance.

The long-term management and maintenance of the landscaping should be considered from the outset, with a clear understanding of the resources and responsibilities required to sustain its quality over time.

We encourage a wider range of inclusive seating to be considered, including seats with backs and armrests and arrangements that support families and social interaction. The design should respond to the needs of older and disabled people, children, families, and women and girls. The material refers to child-friendly space and play, but it is not clear how this has been reflected in the proposals.

There may also be opportunities to acknowledge the Dock Feeder beneath the site through interpretation, public art or landscape design.

The proposed relocation of the statue should be tested carefully against the wider objectives for movement, events, inclusivity and places to dwell, as well as conservation considerations relating to its setting and significance. In particular, we question whether a central position within the main pedestrian route is the most appropriate

location, given the potential implications for movement through the space, flexibility for other uses and the way the statue is experienced within its historic context. It would be helpful to understand what alternative locations have been considered and how the preferred position balances these different considerations.

Engagement and Communication

The quality and clarity of the material presented should be improved to enable the proposals to be properly understood and assessed. Clearer plans, annotations and visualisations are needed to show how different people would move through and use the space, and how the proposals relate to the surrounding context. The material should also provide a clearer explanation of how key design decisions have been reached, what analysis has informed them, what alternative options have been tested, and how consultation feedback will shape the next stage of design development.

As discussed, we can provide more in-depth feedback through our Design Review service, where an independent multidisciplinary panel would review the proposals in more detail and provide constructive design advice. We understand that the project programme does not allow for Design Review at this stage, but the service remains available should additional independent expertise be helpful as the proposals progress.

More generally, we would welcome the opportunity to support the Council through early Design Review of future significant public realm and transport projects, while the principal design decisions and alternatives remain open.

Yours sincerely,



Max Hampton

Design Advisor

T: 029 2045 1964

E: max.hampton@dcfw.org