

SALISBURY VISION

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For immediate release

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Market Place rejuvenation on track



SHARED VISION: Matthew Letts, a director at architects LettsWheeler, holds up a Salisbury Vision DVD at the city's Market Place. Improving the look and feel of public spaces in the heart of the city is a central plank of the Vision



VISION ON: From left at the Market Place in Salisbury, Matthew Letts, a director at architect LettsWheeler, Mark Goodbrand, a senior engineer with engineering consultancy Martin Stockley Associates, Peter Edge, interim chairman of Salisbury Vision, Andrew Wheeler, a director at LettsWheeler, and Stephen O'Malley, a director at Martin Stockley Associates

PLANS are on track to rejuvenate Salisbury's Market Place following an international design competition.

Members of the preferred design team visited the city for a detailed design development briefing with Salisbury Vision's management.

The multi-disciplinary team, led by architects LettsWheeler, said they are keen to reassure the public that a traditional design, greatly improving on what is currently there, will prevail.

Discussions are continuing into what the final design will look like, subject to any financial constraints and feedback, with public engagement high on the agenda.

The team's design concept was the first choice of the public, local businesses, market traders, fairground operators and a professional judging panel.

There had been an extensive consultation process which culminated in a three-day public exhibition, attended by nearly 1,250 people, at the city's Guildhall in January.

Matthew Letts, a director at Nottingham-based LettsWheeler, said: "It is important to stress that our design concept is still evolving and engaging with the public throughout the process is high on our agenda.

"Our concept was the most traditional design out of the shortlisted six because we recognise how important the Market Place is to the daily lives of thousands of people. We will do nothing to undermine that, and we intend living up to the high standards expected of us.

"A recent project we carried out was similar to Salisbury, with equally lovely architectural heritage and associated sensitivities.

"The £1.5m scheme at the historic market town of Stamford in Lincolnshire saw the removal of car parking and the inclusion of cobbled stones and purpose-made street furniture to give a greater sense of place and complement the architectural heritage of one of England's finest stone towns.

"Trade has reportedly flourished, with owners redecorating their shop fronts as a result of the high quality public space they open on to.

"We envisage a similar setting for the public heart of Salisbury, generating a new vibrancy for everyone, from families to visitors to office and shop workers having a break at lunchtime. Change for the better should not be feared."

Mr Letts added: "We recognise there have been raised eyebrows about the initial suggestion of a linear water fountain for children to walk

through and play in. The feature, with only a film of water on the surface, would be safe and practical.

“We want to make it clear that the feature would be turned off during market days and other times. The feature will be discreet, with no pooling of water. There wouldn’t even be a recess channel because this is a working square twice a week.

“Experience tells us that where there are water fountains in city centre squares, families reclaim the public space. Examples include Bristol and Nottingham.

“A square filled with people, young and old, enjoying themselves surely has to be better than the current eyesore car park.”

Peter Edge, the interim chairman of Salisbury Vision, which is a joint private and public sector initiative, said: “We sat down with the chosen design team and went through a detailed brief with them as we look to start the rejuvenation works at the tail end of 2010.

“The process is evolving because cost considerations are important, and it may well be that the public and other parties might like certain aspects of the concept but not everything. However, the timetable is on track.

“It is worth emphasising again to any detractors of the scheme that Salisbury must raise its game, whether we like it or not. The city cannot afford to stand still because visitors will vote with their feet by going elsewhere in the region to spend their leisure time and money.”

Plans to improve the Market Place, which will cost £3m, have been publicly backed by Salisbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the city branch of the Federation of Small Businesses, Salisbury City Centre Management, Salisbury & Stonehenge Tourism and South Wiltshire Economic Partnership.

These are the suggested enhancements by LettsWheeler, in association with London and Manchester-based engineering consultancy Martin Stockley Associates and Nottingham-based public space artist Wolfgang Buttress:

- **A large flexible open central space for all kinds of new events and regular outdoor entertainments**
- **More room for the twice-weekly Charter Market to thrive and expand**
- **New high quality seating, a natural stone surface and a dramatic and flexible lighting scheme**
- **A beautiful linear fountain which is safe and practical for children to walk through and play in**
- **An improved setting for the War Memorial**

Last August saw the international design competition launched by Salisbury Vision in conjunction with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

RIBA runs similar competitions up and down the country to improve the look and feel of public spaces.

The rejuvenation of the Market Place is the first of 24 projects outlined in the Salisbury Vision, which is a blueprint to shape the sustainable future of the city centre for the next two decades.

More information on the Salisbury Vision, including answers to frequently asked questions about the Market Place, can be found by clicking on to www.salisburyvision.co.uk

An eight-minute DVD, outlining the case for regeneration, is also available to order through the website.

Ends

Notes to editors

The Salisbury Vision project is a joint private and public sector initiative to revitalise key areas within the city of Salisbury whilst ensuring that its historic uniqueness is protected.

Aims of the partnership include creating high-quality facilities, new jobs and an improved and sustainable environment for the people of Salisbury and beyond.

Salisbury Vision project members are Wiltshire Council and South West Regional Development Agency.

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