



LDĀDESIGN

UNION TERRACE GARDENS

OUTLINE DESIGN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1.0 OVERVIEW & INTRODUCTION

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Formed by glacial erosion, the Denburn Valley is a distinctive and integral aspect of Aberdeen's city centre. From its first use as a bleaching green to its development as a public park and ultimately, its regeneration, there is a narrative that deserves to be brought to the fore; a habitable green heart that optimises the connection between people, landscape and the city.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Surrounded by listed buildings, busy streets and mature trees, Union Terrace Gardens are one of the most centrally located city parks in Scotland. The regeneration of Union Terrace Gardens provides the opportunity to create a landmark contemporary park for the city of Aberdeen.

Union Terrace Gardens are one of 22 projects identified within the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan and will deliver on almost all of the 8 masterplan objectives, via establishing the Gardens as both a key destination and the connection to a new urban quarter at the head of the Denburn Valley.

MASTERPLAN STRATEGY

The masterplan has been informed by a notable body of previous work including the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan, which includes design objectives for the City as a whole and the Denburn Valley and Union Terrace Gardens in particular. These objectives are then considered in more detail within the Denburn Valley Design Workbook, which takes things further - reviewing previous unimplemented designs and refining the design intent by considering sketch designs. The design brief for this project then took that process on a further stage.

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Both the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan and the Denburn Valley Design Workbook were informed by extensive consultation which has made clear the extent of the community and stakeholder support for renewing the gardens and bringing them into more active use; as well as revealing the technical challenges and varied opinions held by stakeholders and members of the public.

The masterplan has been informed by further stakeholder and public engagement, both earlier in the design development to inform direction, and more recently to gather views on the masterplan progress.

This engagement process has been positive and productive, bringing together the majority of stakeholders and public in a shared vision for the Gardens which informs the Masterplan.

THE VISION - OBJECTIVES

The following key objectives have informed the design:

- *Respect* the existing elements of landscape character, heritage, views and topography.
- *Renew* the physical and cultural connection to the city centre.
- *Reactivate* the associated public space to create a vibrant series of urban spaces.
- *Reimagine* the physical space through interventions which reflect the cultural and emotional memories of the place.



LEGEND

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|----------------------------------|----|--|
| 1 | New entrance building | 5 | New pavilion | 9 | Vantage points / elevated walkways |
| 2 | Raised walkway | 6 | Floating light feature | 10 | Access from HMT for maintenance / events |
| 3 | Community gardens | 7 | Central lawn | 11 | New pavilion |
| 4 | Play areas | 8 | Sloped access with seating walls | 12 | Water feature |
| | | | | 13 | Bon Accord floral crest |

1.1.1 MASTERPLAN - AIMS

- **A preserved and enhanced green space:** Retention of valued existing trees and new planting that is rich in biodiversity and interest which enhances the valued character of the Gardens.
- **New and improved facilities:** The proposals will create a range of new facilities within the Gardens providing facilities for play, community growing, education, toilet provision and places to eat and drink.
- **Celebrating the heritage:** Granite balustrading will be repaired; the 'grand staircase' will be reinstated as a central part of an accessible route into the Gardens; existing statuary will have refreshed settings and the arches will be brought into use. Lighting will highlight heritage features at night.
- **Creation of flexible events spaces:** The central lawn will be a flexible space for large events; and a new entrance plaza opposite His Majesty's Theatre will create spaces for smaller events. Seating along the new accessible route from Rosemount Viaduct will act as an informal amphitheatre.
- **Accessible Gardens for all:** There will be a new accessible route into the lower level of the Gardens from Rosemount Viaduct and a walkway route from Union Street. Disabled parking will be provided on Union Terrace and lift access will be provided from both Union Terrace and Union Street as part of the proposed new buildings.
- **A safe and active space:** New facilities will increase activity, and the proposals seek to further improve safety with new lighting. A new entrance building on Union Street will provide an active hub that overlooks the space in the day and evening. Lighting within the arches will celebrate these features and increase the sense of safety. A major new lighting installation will act as a beacon to attract footfall.

UNION TERRACE GARDENS - MASTERPLAN

1.1.2 DESIGN APPROACH AND ELEMENTS

The design approach is to augment rather than alter the character of the Gardens - building on and enhancing what is already there, whilst encouraging more active use through new facilities and improved accessibility. Key elements of the design are:

Landscape Character : Three distinct character zones will create varied experiences. The Upper Gardens which form the interface with the city - these areas are level with the surrounding streets and include more hardscape and formality than the rest of the Gardens, but more green and playful than the adjacent streets. The Green forms the beating heart of the park, celebrating the heritage of the Victorian Gardens and incorporating modern elements to support contemporary uses. The high quality natural materials and formality of the Upper Gardens continues although softens as civic space becomes public garden. The Arboretum is an area of more intimate character providing a secluded woodland refuge from the city above.

Raised walkways: The raised walkways will be elegant and striking metal clad structures which emerge organically from the slopes of the site - creating new accessibility and viewpoints, taking advantage of and enhancing the unique topography of the Gardens.

Architecture: The architectural concept centres around the notion of lightness of touch and minimal intervention, with reversibility to protect the historic assets. The event spaces incorporate varied community, art and commercial installations within the Gardens to encourage visitors to enjoy a visual and physical dynamic and engagement with the historic spaces and structures of Union Terrace Gardens. Key architectural interventions include:

- A new access building to the Gardens from Union Street incorporating both the conserved Victorian toilets and a new setting for the King Edward VII statue.
- The Rosemount cafe pavilion connecting the Gardens with Union Terrace, Rosemount Viaduct & His Majesty's Theatre and associated with a reimagination of the Denburn.
- The Burns Event - a new setting for the Burns Monument, creating new access to the Gardens from Union Street and providing a gateway to the archway galleries.
- The Archway Galleries - enclosed contemporary exhibition galleries and micro retail and café opportunities to attract visitors.



2.0 MASTERPLAN STRATEGY

2.1 ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN

2.1 ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN

■ The Masterplan Report identifies Union Terrace Gardens as one of 22 physical projects amongst a total of 49 projects that together will deliver the masterplan strategy which aims to deliver the vision of “A city centre for a global city” with the purpose of “Energising the city centre to deliver prosperity and quality of life for all.”

The project is intended to deliver on 6 of the 8 Masterplan Objectives:

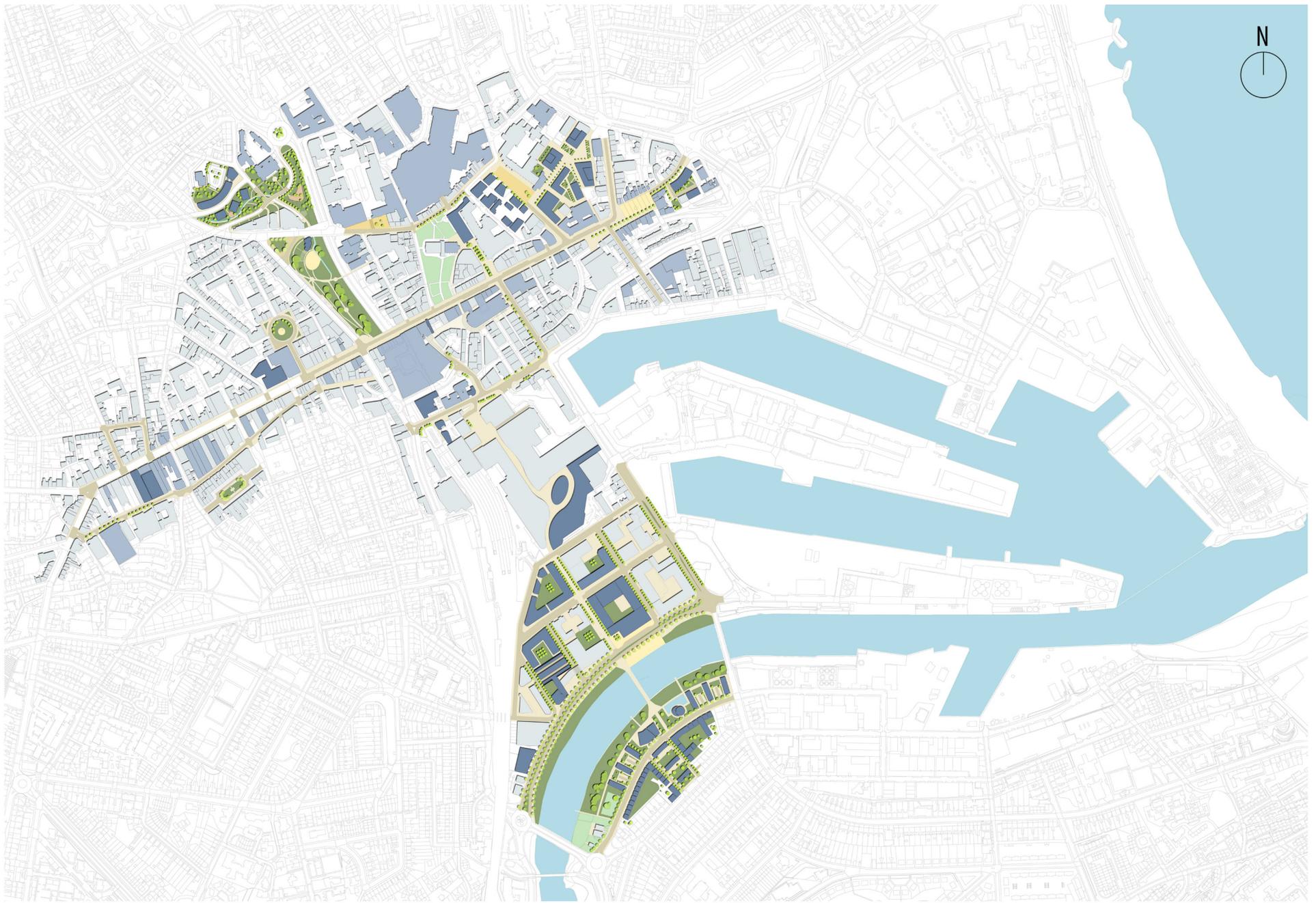
- Changing perceptions: “...a cosmopolitan and vibrant city centre that displays real distinctiveness and colour ... a city centre that people are proud to live and work in, that people want to visit and a city centre where there is always something happening...”
- A metropolitan outlook: “...recognising local needs but also ensuring that the city centre meets the needs of the wider population...”
- A living city for everyone: “... tackling a range of environmental issues: (e.g. air quality, walkability, day/night vibrancy and safety) ... Improving the quality and accessibility of natural assets will yield multi-functional benefits including health and wellbeing, biodiversity, flood defence, recreation and sustainable transport.”
- Made in Aberdeen: “... develop a range of distinctive experiences so that Aberdeen City Centre is like no other place ...articulating in both new buildings and external spaces distinctiveness in character.”
- Revealing waterfronts: “... reconnecting the city centre with the history of the city ...making the most of the almost universal and timeless attraction of water.”
- Culturally distinctive: “... A creative and well-funded events programme, which exploits the strength and character of the city’s public spaces and buildings...”

Although not identified in the Masterplan Report, there is also the opportunity to deliver on the Masterplan Objective of being “Technologically advanced and environmentally responsible”, both through the contribution the project makes to the resilience of the city, through use of sustainable materials and taking advantage of technology within the proposals.

In relation to the Denburn Valley ‘Intervention Area’, the Masterplan Report indicates that the masterplan focus is that “A revitalised Union Terrace Gardens establishes itself as a key destination and the linking thread to a new residential quarter”, with the vision that “The Denburn Valley will come alive through the revitalisation and expansion of the Union Terrace Gardens and a new urban quarter at the head of the valley...”. Specific opportunities identified in relation to Union Terrace Gardens include enhanced connections, restoration of historic features and sensitive contemporary interventions with the intent to create a “more accessible, enticing and vibrant city centre destination.”

A number of development objectives are also identified for Union Terrace Gardens, including:

- Improved pedestrian access
- Enhanced soft and hard landscaping
- Repair of the historic balustrades on Union Terrace
- Reuse of the arches below Union Terrace for community and commercial uses
- Restoration of the Union Terrace Gardens toilets
- New attractions including a natural play area, outdoor amphitheatre and a focal point building
- Flexible events space
- Potential to reveal or interpret the ‘memory’ of the Denburn water course
- Expansion alongside His Majesty’s Theatre and Skene Street.



ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN 2015 - PHYSICAL PROJECTS

2.2 THE JOURNEY SO FAR

2.2 THE JOURNEY SO FAR

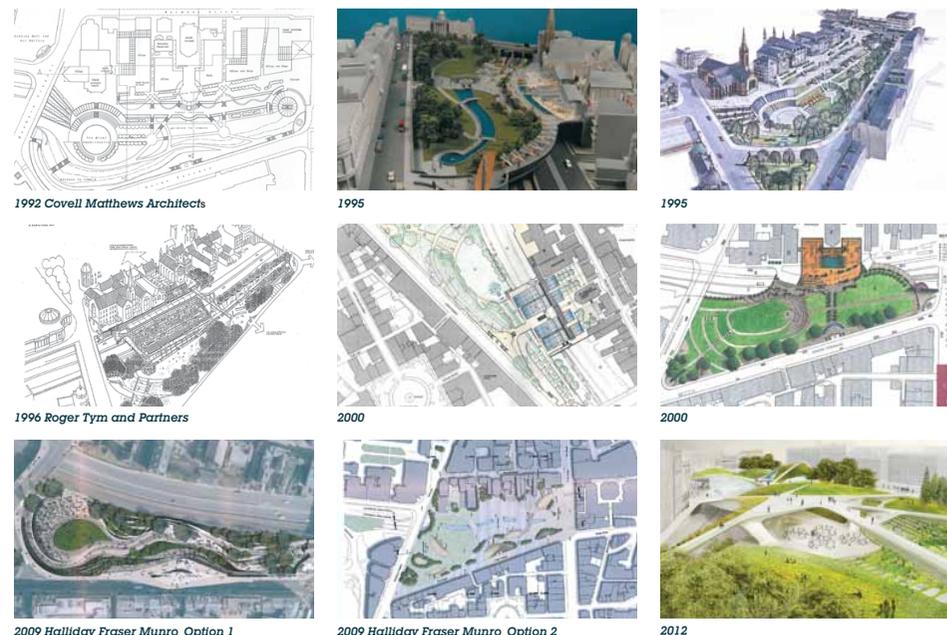
█ The Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan included the ‘Denburn Valley Design Workbook’ which sets out the history, issues, results of consultation and some sketch ideas for the Denburn Valley Masterplan and Union Terrace Gardens. This workbook and the brief for the Union Terrace Gardens formed the starting point for the journey towards the Outline Design proposals.

DENBURN VALLEY DESIGN WORKBOOK (JUNE 2015)

The Design Workbook provides further detail, building on the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan. It reviews a number of proposals designed between 1992 and 2012, none of which have been constructed. The Workbook summarises public consultation which affirms strong local support for the revitalisation of the Gardens as an actively used, accessible greenspace. The public consultation also considered the challenges involved in that task. Key issues emerging were:

- █ Preserve the green space
- █ Accessibility
- █ Create events space
- █ Improve facilities
- █ Safety
- █ Heritage Features

These key aims are then explored via sketch designs. Ideas examined include the retention and enhancement of the greenspace character and treescape; accessibility – in particular a route connecting the base of the Gardens with Union Street; the creation of an events space with an associated pavilion; improved facilities including use of the spaces under the arches; lighting and activity to improve safety; and the retention of valued heritage features including the Victorian toilets, floral crest and the Union Terrace arcade and balustrade. Two further ideas explored in the previous designs and sketch designs included a bridge over the Gardens and the potential for reinstatement of the Denburn watercourse.



¹ EXTRACT FROM DENBURN VALLEY DESIGN WORKBOOK – PREVIOUS PROPOSALS

² EXTRACT FROM DENBURN VALLEY DESIGN WORKBOOK – CONSULTATION SUMMARY

2.2.1 UNION TERRACE GARDENS BRIEF (JUNE 2016)

■ The brief for this design was issued in June 2016, building on the Denburn Valley Design Workbook. The brief sets out the following main objectives:

- Retaining and enhancing the ‘much loved gem’ feeling of UTG, creating a new contemporary place to be a new cherished space of vibrancy, creating desire to visit and enjoy the Gardens.
- Enhanced access into and through the Gardens, along with connectivity to the wider area - including Union Street and the railway station to the south, His Majesty’s Theatre and the Denburn Valley to the north and improved connectivity to east and west.
- Enhanced activity and events of a wide range and types across the year in the Gardens, benefited by enhanced access into the park, to encourage further visitors and, as part of a positive cycle of improvement, to help support a range of food and beverage, retail and studio uses in the Gardens.

The following sub-objectives are also identified:

- Restoration / enhancement of historic features.
- Additional, usable open space with maximum flexibility for meeting the main objective of enhanced activity / events.
- To maximise the contribution of the Gardens as an exemplar of environmental, natural habitat and horticultural splendour, including broader sustainability best practice.
- To introduce new and contemporary features to the Gardens in terms of children’s play, art, technology, education and associated benefits.

In terms of detail, the brief includes the following detailed directions:

- **Heritage:** The listed buildings and structures in and around the park should be treated as assets that contribute to sense of place, rather than constraints.
- **Access:** Achieving more accessible space for cyclists, pedestrians and those with impaired mobility is a priority and a combination of different approaches using stairs, lifts and/or recontouring of slopes should be considered.
- **Approaches and Connectivity:** Entrances and approaches should be considered in terms of connectivity, convenience, comfort, conviviality, safety and legibility, and include the use of high quality materials and appropriate signage. Future connections to the railway and Trinity Centre should be considered.

- **Lighting:** The strategy for lighting should consider ambience, delineation, security and safety.
- **Bridge link to Belmont Street:** Early work should consider the costs, benefits, risks and opportunities arising from a potential bridge link to enable an informed decision on whether this should be included in the design.
- **Cycling:** Cycling should be encouraged, but not to the detriment of other users. The potential for a cycling hub should be considered along with a creative approach to short stay cycle parking.
- **Vehicular Access:** suitable access for vehicles for maintenance and to serve buildings will need to be incorporated into proposals.
- **Topography:** The existing site levels form part of the Gardens’ distinctive character and heritage.
- **Habitats and trees:** The environmental value of the Gardens should be protected and habitat value improved, and the treescape preserved and enhanced through improved management as part of the proposals.
- **Water and flooding:** The potential for de-culverting the Denburn should be considered and the potential for the Gardens to be used to alleviate flooding at times of heavy rainfall through water management within the Gardens should be considered within proposals.
- **Activities and events:** The brief sets a focus on increased footfall via a regular events programme, varied community and commercial uses to attract day-to-day users and increasing the attractiveness, and usability of the space. Flexibility is regarded as key; with areas such as an amphitheatre not being ‘single purpose’ but being welcoming, usable spaces even when there is not an event.
- **Toilets:** Refurbishment or re-purposing of the Victorian toilets should be included in the proposals, along with consideration of new provision as part of cafe and event facilities.

The brief for the Outline Design identified that design proposals should be developed and expressed within the following key outputs:

- Review of previous proposals and consultation and early discussions with ACC and other key other stakeholders;
- Heritage and Conservation Strategy;
- Outline Access Strategy;
- Outline Landscape / Environment Strategy;
- Outline Activities Strategy;
- Consultation Strategy which builds on previous consultations; and
- Outline costs and business case.

2.2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF COMPONENTS FROM CCMP SCHEMATIC PROPOSALS

BRIDGE LINK FROM BELMONT STREET

As discussed above, the Denburn Valley Workbook proposals included a potential bridge link from Belmont Street. As part of the development of the conceptual proposals, the team has considered the benefits, risks and opportunities arising from a potential bridge link.

Issues with the bridge proposal outlined in the schematic are that it does not create direct access into the Gardens, rather 'over sails' the Gardens with the bridge landing on Union Terrace. Access down to the lower level is then created by a lift. Due to the level changes, it is not possible for the bridge from Belmont Street to touch down in the Gardens, delivering people directly into the space.

The concept proposals taken forward create multiple new accessible entrances to the north and south of Union Terrace Gardens which will provide fully inclusive access, directly into the lower level of the Gardens. This greatly improves the relationship with not only Belmont Street but other surrounding streets. We consider this to be an advancement of the schematic bridge proposal.

With Union Street a two-minute journey from the Gardens, it is considered that the expense of a major new bridge link does not deliver the benefits of creating direct pedestrian access and the direct accessibility therefore makes the proposed pedestrian bridge link from Belmont Street unnecessary. That said, the concept proposals will not preclude the future inclusion of a bridge from Belmont Street, the route of which can be future proofed in the Outline Design.

Another issue with the outline proposal is that the 'free standing' lift associated with the schematic bridge proposals would also be vulnerable to vandalism. The Outline proposals taken forward ensure any lift access is contained within buildings and is therefore managed and maintained by an operator, removing the risk of misuse and disrepair. The proposed bridge included in the schematic Denburn Valley proposals also involves the structure to be constructed over the existing road carriageway and railway line, creating issues with the location of structural supports and potential for protracted negotiations with Network Rail.



¹ DIAGRAM OF PROPOSED BELMONT STREET BRIDGE

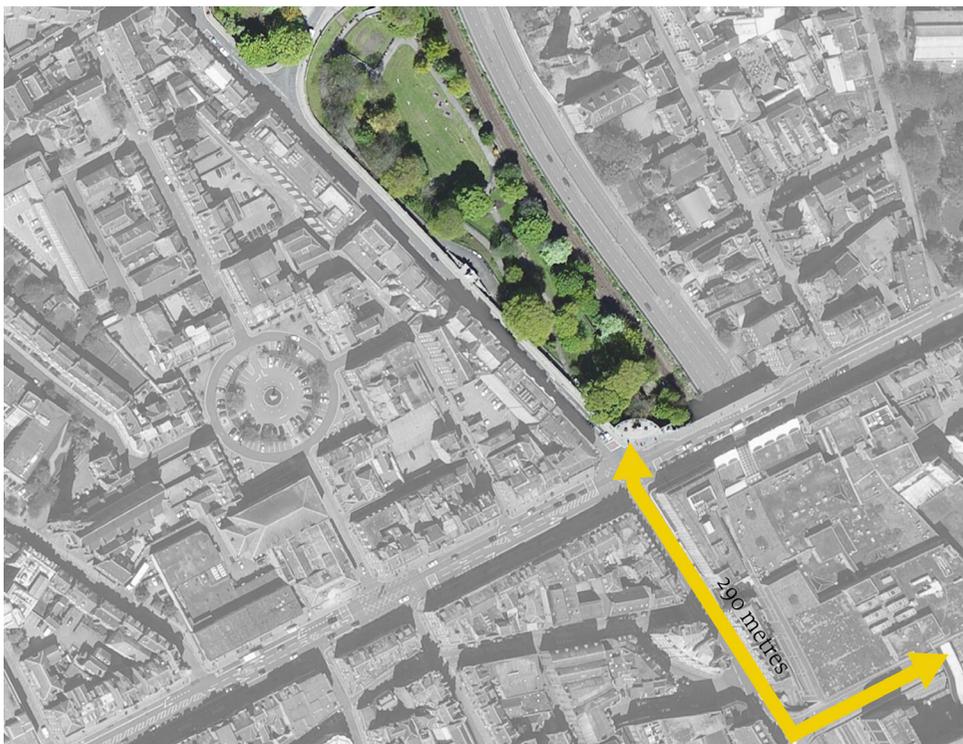
² DIAGRAM SHOWING MULTIPLE ACCESS POINTS AND WALKING DISTANCES

PROPOSED BELOW GROUND CONNECTION FROM STATION

■ The Denburn Valley Workbook proposals included a potential subterranean link from the Railway Station into Union Terrace Gardens. This option has been investigated as part of the development of the Outline Design proposals. Engineering teams have led an investigation into the route which has concluded that the layout of columns and the taper in the platform make it unnatural for pedestrian traffic and the wall at the end of the platform blocks off connection to the Gardens. Although no structural records, nor confirmation of ownership has been obtained for this wall it is clear that, even if it proved feasible to break through, major works would be necessary to form a connection to the Gardens and consequently a low level route from station to Gardens is not viewed as being practicable within the remit of the UTG project and as such has not been taken forward. In addition, the platform below the buildings is dark and cold, and does not feel like a secure area to walk through. There is potentially the risk of vandalism or muggings in this area.

In terms of distance the route along Guild Street/ Bridge Street to Union Terrace Gardens is approximately 60m longer than the proposed subterranean route from the railway station. Although longer, the above ground route provides a much more pleasant experience for pedestrians and does not have the same perceived issues that underpasses do. Our recommendation is that opportunities to create an 'urban avenue' along this route to further enhance the pedestrian experience should be explored in future but these do not fall within the remit of this commission. See Appendix 1.3 for further information.

For further detail on the Railway connection please refer to Appendix 1.3 Section 2.4



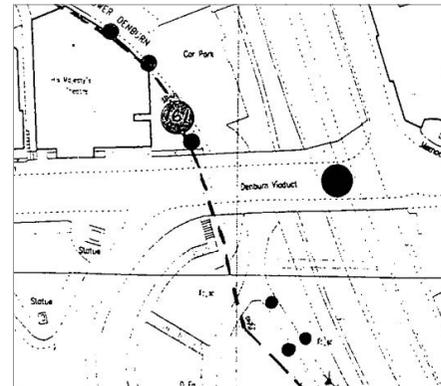
¹ DIAGRAM OF PROPOSED SUBTERRANEAN LINK FROM RAILWAY STATION TO GARDENS

² DIAGRAM OF STREET LEVEL ROUTE FROM RAILWAY STATION

REOPENING THE DENBURN CULVERT

The Denburn is currently 'piped' below ground through the Denburn culvert. The culvert is a masonry brick arch structure approximately 6m in width. The Denburn Valley Workbook proposals looked at the potential to reopen the Denburn culvert which transects a small corner of the Gardens. There are a number of reasons this is not feasible. Firstly, the Denburn culvert only transects a small corner of the existing Gardens. Secondly, there are issues with both water quality and flooding which preclude the option of opening the culvert. We are keen that the former Denburn is referenced in the design as part of the heritage of the Gardens. The Outline Design design proposals therefore provide historical 'interpretation' of the Denburn, referencing the watercourse in a series of new waterfeatures. The proposals therefore 'reimagine' the culverted burn as a series of water features which lead people into Union Terrace Gardens from Rosemount Viaduct, through the new accessible route to the north of the Gardens. The water features also activate the space creating a new setting for the Wallace and Prince Albert statues.

For further detail on the Denburn Culvert please refer to Appendix 1.3 Section 3.7



- 1 DENBURN - DIAGRAM
- 2,3 DENBURN CULVERT - HISTORIC PHOTOS
- 4 DENBURN CULVERT - UTILITIES PLAN
- 5 DENBURN REIMAGINED - DIAGRAM





CALEDONIAN HOTEL LINK

Previous proposals had looked at the potential of reopening a link which was believed to have existed connecting the Caledonian Hotel to Union Terrace Gardens through a tunnel that ran below Union Terrace. The team have investigated the existence of a tunnel in this location and there is no evidence of a link to Gardens.

The basement space of the hotel does extend underneath the footway but this connection does not continue all the way to Union Terrace Gardens. In addition, the plant room for the Hotel is located in this basement. The proposal, had it been feasible, would have created a 'private' link to the Gardens for hotel patrons in any case - which is not considered desirable.



¹ CALEDONIAN LINK - DIAGRAM

² PHOTOGRAPHS SHOWING PLANTROOM BELOW CALEDONIAN HOTEL

2.3

CONSULTATION
OVERVIEW

2.3 CONSULTATION – OVERVIEW

█ The Denburn Valley Design Workbook summarises consultation undertaken as part of the City Centre Masterplan development. Building on that, further consultation has taken place to inform the developing Outline Design proposals herein.

SUMMARY OF PRIOR CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Feedback gained through prior public consultation on the outline proposals within the Denburn Valley Design Workbook identified the objectives outlined in section 2.2 of this report, but comments regarding the Outline Design proposals in the Workbook also broadly fell into three categories:

- █ Those unsupportive of the proposals felt they ‘do not go far enough in terms of reverting back to the City Gardens proposals’.
- █ Those who believe the proposals go too far and would compromise the heritage aspects of the Gardens.
- █ Those supportive of direction of change, but expressing concern about how sensitively these changes would be carried out on the ground.

This has been explored further through the early consultation resulting in the key message that there is a very careful balance to be struck between delivering the ‘transformational’ change required to alter perceptions, regenerate use and maximise the potential of the Gardens to act as an economic catalyst; and respecting and celebrating heritage and preserving the unique green space character.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

As part of the development of the Outline Design proposals *LDA Design* has undertaken the following consultation, which builds on the prior consultation that formed part of the City Centre Masterplan development.

STAKEHOLDER ONE TO ONES

A series of individual stakeholder engagement sessions were undertaken throughout September and October 2016 to inform stakeholders of *LDA Design*’s role, brief, design process and timescales for the current project, and to understand, first hand, the existing challenges and future aspirations for Union Terrace Gardens from a wide range of interested parties including Aberdeen City Council, local businesses and organisations, educational institutions and community groups. The key themes emerging from the stakeholder engagement were similar to those identified in the Denburn Valley Design Workbook and can be summarised as follows:

- █ **Improving connectivity and accessibility:** Provision of fully inclusive accessibility, connecting the Gardens to key streets and spaces.
- █ **Enhancing heritage assets and cultural associations:** Arches, balustrades, Victorian toilets, industrial heritage and cultural associations.
- █ **Improving safety and amenities within the park:** lighting, toilet provision, cafes.
- █ **Activation of the gardens with attractions, events, destination draw:** creating capacity for programmed events, creating permanent attraction.
- █ **Improving the quality of the greenspace:** improved planting, management of existing vegetation, addressing drainage.

A detailed summary of the outcomes of the September-October stakeholder engagement is included in Appendix 1.1 within Volume 2 of this Outline Design report.



COMMUNITY ACTIVATION

- An activation event in November 2016 - this was undertaken by artist and participatory design consultants NADFLY working with *LDA Design* and involved the creation of a series of visual representations of elements of the existing Gardens which were printed onto A3 sized flags mounted on thin bamboo poles. These flags were placed across the Gardens and during the event the public were encouraged to take a flag home, bringing a piece of the Gardens with them, spreading them across the city and preparing the community for regeneration and change.
- In association with the activation event, a series of 'Instagrams of the Future' were distributed as postcards to encourage engagement in terms of envisioning future events in the regenerated Gardens, and advertise the next round of public consultation in early December.



¹ ACTIVATION EVENT - FLAG DETAIL

² PARTICIPANTS AT THE ACTIVATION EVENT NOVEMBER 2016

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

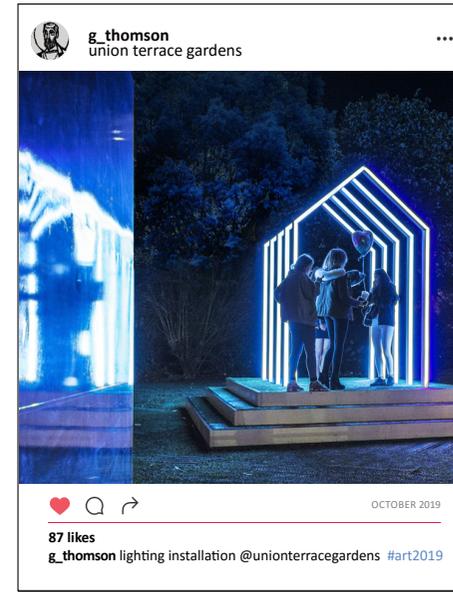
- Key stakeholders were invited to a presentation of the emerging conceptual proposals on the 2nd December 2016 held as a series of group sessions throughout the day. Each presentation session was followed by a workshop in which the groups of stakeholders fed back their thoughts on the emerging conceptual proposals. This information has been collated and will inform the development of proposals at the beginning of Detailed Design in January 2017.
- Elected members were also invited to a private viewing of proposals with opportunity to feedback their thoughts on the proposals to the design team.

A detailed summary of the outcomes of the Stakeholder Engagement is included in Appendix 1.1 within Volume 2 of the Outline Design report.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Public engagement was undertaken in early December 2016. This took place as the Outline Design report was being prepared. The public engagement included the manned exhibition of the emerging concept proposals in The Academy over the weekend of 3rd and 4th December, at the Winter Village from the 5th to the 9th December and in the Bon Accord and at Trinity Shopping Centres on the 8th and 9th of December. In addition, the proposals were displayed in an unmanned exhibition at the Marischal College service centre from the 2nd to the 9th of December.
- In association with the public exhibitions, the proposals were available online along with survey forms to canvas widespread public opinion. Hard copies of the surveys were also available at the exhibitions along with QR code links to the online information and questionnaire.
- The purpose of the surveys was to gain feedback on how people feel about the proposals, to assess how well they think the proposals address the issues identified in prior consultations and how the proposals could be further improved to address these issues. As with the stakeholder sessions, all of the feedback will inform the next stage of design development.
- Additional public presentations were given to the Community Council Forum and pupils at Harlaw Academy.

A report detailing the outcomes from the December 2016 public engagement will be released in January 2017. A brief summary of outcomes are contained overleaf.



¹ FUTURE INSTAGRAM POSTCARD USED TO PROMOTE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

² DECEMBER 2016 EXHIBITION AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION, THE ACADEMY, BELMONT STREET



SUMMARY OF CURRENT ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

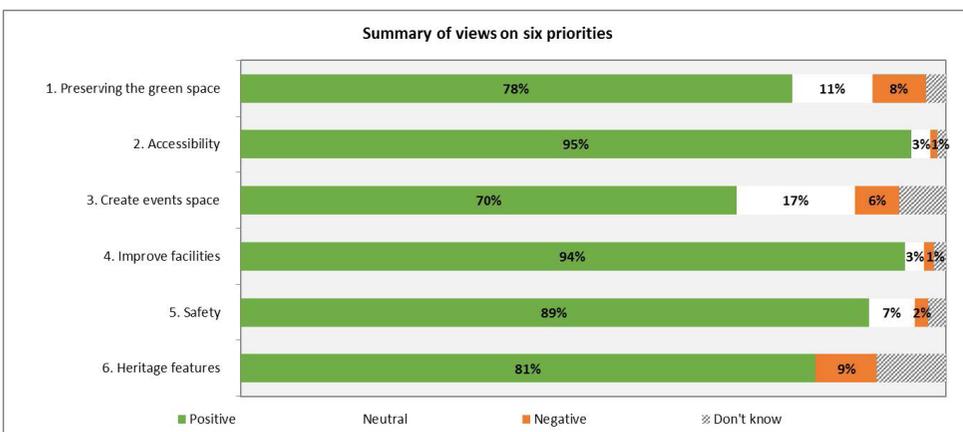
Throughout the public engagement (which ran between 2 and 9 December 2016) an online consultation survey was published through the Council's Citizen Space portal, and printed copies of the consultation document distributed locally. A total of 1417 responses were received by the time the engagement process closed. This included 1298 responses through the Citizen Space portal, and 119 hard copy responses. Hard copies included 48 responses from pupils of Harlaw Academy and Robert Gordon's College. The Children's Parliament Imagineers (pupils representing Aberdeen City primary schools) also took part in an exercise to provide feedback on the proposals.

The public engagement sought views on proposals for the revitalisation of Union Terrace Gardens. These proposals have been developed on the basis of six priorities identified through the City Centre Masterplan process, specifically: 1. Preserving the green space; 2. Accessibility; 3. Create events space; 4. Improve facilities; 5. Safety; and 6. Heritage features. The consultation document included seven main consultation questions asking for views on specific aspects of the proposals – one question in relation to each of the six priorities, and a final open ended question inviting any further comments.

The table opposite sets out an overview of respondents' rating of the Union Terrace Gardens proposals against each of the six priorities. As this shows, views are positive in relation to all six priorities; a large majority of respondents feel that proposals will deliver benefits in relation to each of the six priorities, and relatively few respondents gave negative ratings. Particular points of note are:

- Views are most positive in relation to accessibility (95% positive ratings), improving facilities (94%), and safety (89%). Only 1-2% of respondents feel that proposals would be a negative step for these priorities.
- Views are also positive in relation to heritage features (81% positive ratings), preserving the green space (78%) and creating events space (70%). Ratings are slightly less positive for these priorities, and respondents are more likely to have a negative view of proposals in relation to heritage features (8% negative ratings), green space (8%) and events space (6%). However the majority of respondents rated the proposals positively, and negative ratings remain a relatively small minority. Indeed the somewhat lower level of positive ratings for green space and events space are primarily due to a larger proportion of respondents giving neutral "no change" ratings, rather than a significant volume of negative ratings.

A more detailed summary of the outcomes of the Public Engagement is included in Appendix 1.1.2 within Volume 2 of the Outline Design report.



¹ PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CHRISTMAS MARKET, DECEMBER 2016

² SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION SURVEY

2.4 UNION
TERRACE GARDENS
- VISION

2.4 UNION TERRACE GARDENS – VISION

■ The overarching vision for the Gardens has been derived from the outcomes of the prior and ongoing engagement exercises detailed in the preceding section. This has been supported by further understanding of the gardens arising from the detailed analysis undertaken as part of the outline design development process.

The vision aims to deliver a careful balance between delivering ‘transformational’ change with preserving the unique green space qualities of the Gardens and respecting and celebrating heritage. The main objectives of the vision are:

- *Respecting* the existing elements of landscape character, heritage, views and topography.
- *Renewing* the physical and cultural connection to the city centre.
- *Reactivating* the associated public space to create vibrant urban spaces.
- *Reimagining* the physical space through interventions which reflect the cultural and emotional memories of the place.

The key moves set out by the vision are described here, under the six priority themes.

A PRESERVED AND ENHANCED GREEN SPACE

The proposals seek to preserve and enhance the green space of the Gardens by:

- Creating new, enhanced tree and shrub planting that is rich in biodiversity and creates new wildlife habitats.
- Retaining the maximum number of existing trees as possible, removing only those in poor health or quality.
- Replacing any existing trees to be removed with new mature specimen trees
- Retaining and reinterpreting the ‘floral crest’ as richly planted garden route from Rosemount Viaduct into the Gardens.
- Retaining the large central lawn space as a place for gathering and events.
- Creating a community garden to the edge of the space adjacent to the railway line.

NEW AND IMPROVED FACILITIES

The proposals will create a range of new facilities within the Gardens providing facilities for play, community growing, education, toilet provision and places to eat and drink. These include:

- Potential cafe and gallery space at the Burns Monument and within the arches.
- Restoration and upgrade of the existing Victorian Toilets on Union Terrace as part of a new entrance building with new use.
- A new cafe pavilion opposite His Majesty’s Theatre.
- Upgrade of the existing ‘bothy’ as a space for park maintenance teams to store equipment and utilise as an education and training space.
- Provision of opportunities for both formal and informal play.
- Provision of water and power supplies throughout the Gardens for events.
- A new community garden space adjacent to the railway.

CELEBRATING THE HERITAGE

The proposals will celebrate the existing heritage features within the Gardens by:

- Repairing the existing granite balustrading to the perimeter of the Gardens.
- Reinstating the ‘grand staircase’ as a central part of the new accessible route into the Gardens from Rosemount Viaduct.
- Reusing the existing granite steps, walls and coping materials as part of the new interventions.
- Retaining the existing monuments to the edges of the Gardens, giving them a new, enhanced setting.
- Creating new interventions within the arches which are ‘lightweight structures’ that express the heritage fabric of the Gardens.
- Using lighting to celebrate heritage features such as the arches, monuments and viaduct.



LEGEND

- 1 New entrance building
- 2 Raised walkway
- 3 Community gardens
- 4 Play areas
- 5 New pavilion
- 6 Floating light feature
- 7 Central lawn
- 8 Sloped access with seating walls
- 9 Vantage points / elevated walkways
- 10 Access from HMT for maintenance / events
- 11 New pavilion
- 12 Water feature
- 13 Bon Accord floral crest

DESIGN PROPOSALS - MASTERPLAN

CREATION OF FLEXIBLE EVENTS SPACES

The proposals seek to create a series of flexible spaces throughout the Gardens for hosting a wide range of type and scale of events. These include:

- Retaining the central lawn as a flexible space for large scale gathering and events.
- Creating accessible viewing platforms which provide elevated events spaces for smaller scale events.
- New entrance plaza opposite His Majesty's Theatre which can accommodate smaller scale events.
- Seating along the new accessible route from Rosemount Viaduct to act as an informal 'amphitheatre' space to view events in the lower lawn area.
- Provision of metered water and power points throughout the Gardens to provide necessary supply for events.

ACCESSIBLE GARDENS FOR ALL

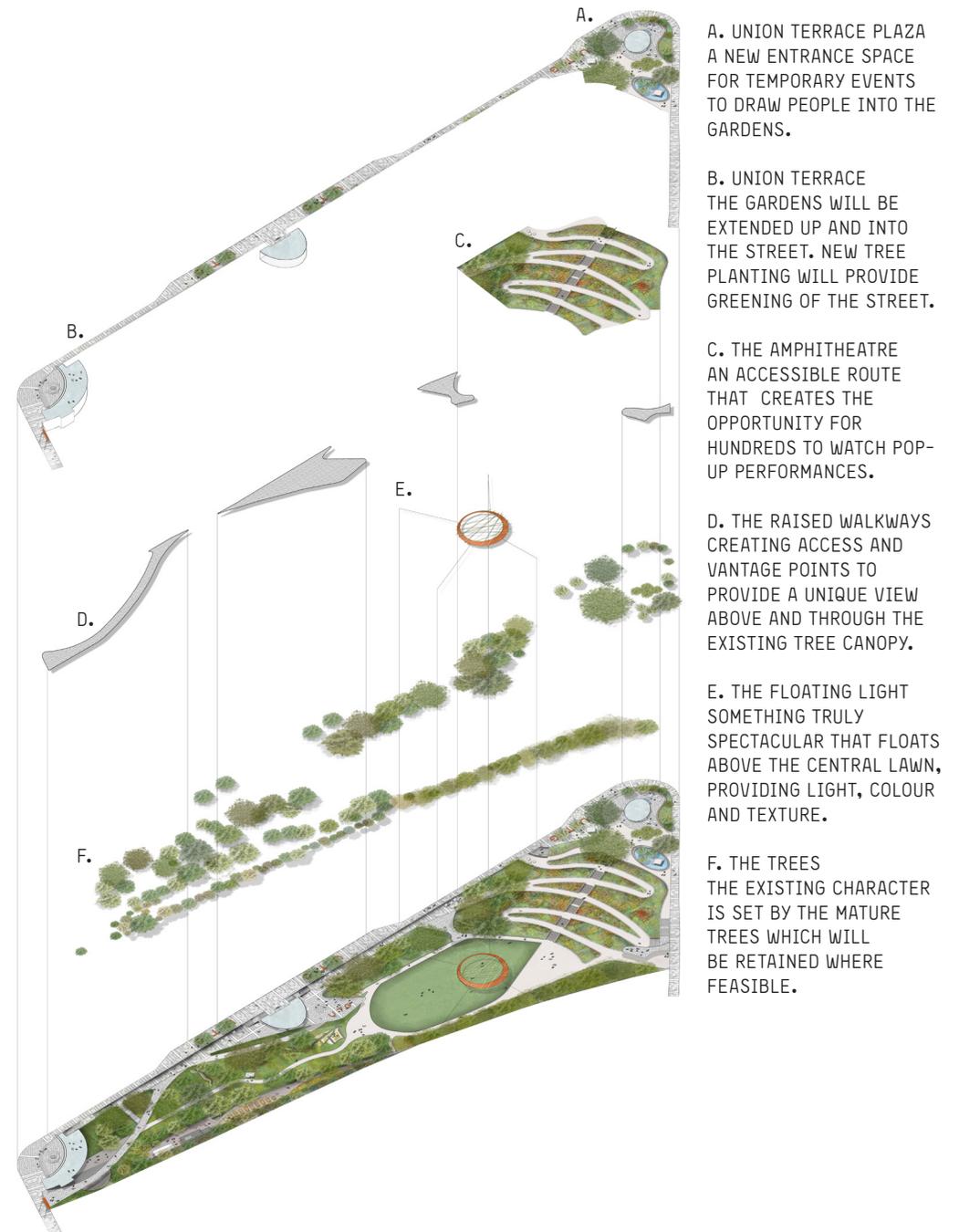
The proposals seek to improve the accessibility of the gardens by creating:

- New accessible route into the lower level of the Gardens from Rosemount Viaduct.
- A level access route into the lower level of the Gardens at the rear of His Majesty's Theatre through the existing Rosemount Viaduct Archway.
- New disabled parking spaces on Union Terrace directly adjacent to the new accessible walkway routes into the Gardens.
- New accessible walkway route into the Gardens from Union Street.
- Lift access from Union Street into the lower level of the Gardens through a new entrance building on Union Street.
- Lift access from Union Terrace into the upper level of the Gardens through a new entrance building on Union Terrace at the existing Burns Monument.

A SAFE AND ACTIVE SPACE

New facilities will increase activity during the day and evening, and the proposals seek to further improve safety with new lighting levels throughout. This includes:

- Improved lighting to the new accessible walkways into the Gardens.
- Creation of a new entrance building on Union Street, providing an activity hub that overlooks the space in the day and evening.
- Lighting installation within the arches to animate the upper terrace and increase the sense of safety and security along this edge.
- A major new lighting installation within the gardens which acts as a beacon to attract footfall into and around the Gardens.



A. UNION TERRACE PLAZA
A NEW ENTRANCE SPACE
FOR TEMPORARY EVENTS
TO DRAW PEOPLE INTO THE
GARDENS.

B. UNION TERRACE
THE GARDENS WILL BE
EXTENDED UP AND INTO
THE STREET. NEW TREE
PLANTING WILL PROVIDE
GREENING OF THE STREET.

C. THE AMPHITHEATRE
AN ACCESSIBLE ROUTE
THAT CREATES THE
OPPORTUNITY FOR
HUNDREDS TO WATCH POP-
UP PERFORMANCES.

D. THE RAISED WALKWAYS
CREATING ACCESS AND
VANTAGE POINTS TO
PROVIDE A UNIQUE VIEW
ABOVE AND THROUGH THE
EXISTING TREE CANOPY.

E. THE FLOATING LIGHT
SOMETHING TRULY
SPECTACULAR THAT FLOATS
ABOVE THE CENTRAL LAWN,
PROVIDING LIGHT, COLOUR
AND TEXTURE.

F. THE TREES
THE EXISTING CHARACTER
IS SET BY THE MATURE
TREES WHICH WILL
BE RETAINED WHERE
FEASIBLE.

MASTERPLAN ELEMENTS - EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC SHOWING KEY COMPONENTS

