

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA****COUNCIL – 30 NOVEMBER 2005****REPORT BY DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR  
PLANNING POLICY, HOUSING POLICY AND TRANSPORTATION****RESPONSE TO PETITION AGAINST IMPROVEMENTS TO SLOANE  
SQUARE**

This report provides information to Members in response to the petition presented to the Council opposing improvements to Sloane Square.

**FOR INFORMATION**

**1 Background**

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on the 21 September, Councillor Corbet-Singleton presented a petition titled 'Sloane Square in Danger' with the following prayer:

'The Council plans to make Sloane Square into a crossroads. To do so it needs to cut down several mature trees, move the fountain and war memorial, close off some roads and this will probably result in increased rat runs in nearby streets. It will lose the well loved symmetrical island and traffic will in fact be more apparent in the square centre. It will cost over £5.2 million and may take years of disruption to complete. If you would prefer the money spent better elsewhere and simpler refurbishing of the square within the existing gyratory, please sign this petition.'

**2. Sloane Square Proposals**

- 2.1 How the Square should be improved has been the subject of two recent public consultations. In April 2003, the Council carried out its first public consultation, which offered a number of options ranging from retaining the gyratory to a radical re-ordering of the Square. As 60% of respondents favoured changing the layout of the Square, further work was undertaken to develop a workable alternative layout to the gyratory.
- 2.2 A further public consultation was carried earlier this year to make sure there was still good local support for a re-ordering of the Square. This again offered the alternative option of retaining the gyratory. In April I considered a Key Decision Report outlining the results of the consultation and this time an even larger majority of

respondents supported changing the layout of the Square. Overall, 77 per cent of the 1863 responses received voted for the new layout and over 75% of residents of both the Royal Borough and the City of Westminster who responded supported the new layout. Having carefully considered these results, I agreed that the option to change the layout of the Square should be taken to the next stage of detailed design. It was also agreed that the Sloane Square Advisory Group be set up through the constitution to assist the detailed design process which is currently in progress.

### **3. Petition**

3.1 I believe the petition has been organised by the 'Save Sloane Square Action Group', who have continued to oppose proposals to change the layout of the Square since the last public consultation exercise. Officers have checked the details of the petition. From the information, which can be deciphered, the petition is made up of 939 signatures, 557 of which give addresses within the Royal Borough. A total of 322 signatures represent 281 addresses within the original Sloane Square consultation area, 157 from Hans Town Ward, 86 from Royal Hospital Ward and 79 from the City of Westminster. Of the 322 signatories, 48 responded to the last public consultation, the remainder did not.

3.2 It is difficult to know what background knowledge of the proposals the signatories had and the prayer of the petition is rather one-sided. However, my response to the key points of the petition is:

- The removal of several mature trees:  
*The canopy of trees is an essential part of Sloane Square's character and the new design has been developed to ensure that the tree coverage will continue to dominate the vistas from the main approaches. In order to provide the new section of road through Sloane Square it will be necessary to remove the two mature trees at this point. Several other less mature trees will also be removed and be replaced to provide a more appropriate spatial layout for the trees in relation to the new open spaces. There will be no overall loss in the number of trees.*
- The moving of the fountain and war memorial:  
*The fountain lies on the line of the new section of road through the Square and therefore requires to be repositioned onto the new open space created outside Peter Jones. The war memorial's proposed new position is in a more open expanse of the new open space, just south-west of its current position where it will be more visible. It is considered that the new locations for both important features will enhance their*

*presence in the Square and importantly the new layout will facilitate pedestrian access to both. The war memorial is now a listed building therefore its relocation will need Listed Building consent issued by English Heritage.*

- The closure of roads and the increase of rat runs:  
*The new layout has been the subject of a great deal of traffic modelling work which demonstrates that a signalised staggered junction will cope with the existing level of traffic passing through the Square. Traffic queues will be no worse than at present. This modelling work was independently ratified by Transport for London, who would strongly oppose any scheme that would compromise the road network. The Mayor of London has announced his intention to extend the Congestion Charge Zone, which, if introduced will reduce traffic levels around the Square, making the new layout work even more efficiently. Further traffic modelling work is now to be undertaken in close liaison with Westminster City Council to fine tune the proposals.*
- Sloane Square will lose the well loved symmetrical island and traffic will in fact be more apparent in the square centre:  
*Sloane Square is defined by the surrounding buildings and not the shape of the traffic island, which has only existed since the 1930s and was implemented as a traffic measure. At present traffic dominates the Square on all four sides and there is a great deal of underused road space compared to public open space. The current arrangements also discourage use of the central area by pedestrians. The new layout makes more efficient use of less road space resulting in much more usable and accessible open space for pedestrians.*
- The scheme will cost over £5.2 million and may take years of disruption to complete:  
*For sometime the Council has earmarked Sloane Square for environmental improvement to make it a safer and more pleasant place for pedestrians. This has coincided with the Mayor of London's designation of Sloane Square in the first ten of his "One Hundred Spaces For London" initiative, which is intended to promote good streetscape in London. Many elements of the current layout of the Square need improving and this would amount to a significant cost even if the same layout were retained. The current estimate for the scheme is £5.2 million, but Transport for London has given a specific commitment to fund 50% of the cost of the scheme, leaving the Council to fund the rest from its own funds and other general traffic allocations from Transport for London, which can be channelled to fund the scheme. The new layout would*

*take about 18 months to implement and the programme of works would be designed to keep local disruption to a minimum with the main traffic routes through Square being maintained during construction.*

- 3.3 Members of the 'Save Sloane Action Group' have been invited onto the Sloane Square Advisory Group, where they have continued to lobby against changes to the layout of the Square. The 'Save Sloane Square Action Group' recently submitted to the Council their alternative scheme for Sloane Square based on retaining the Gyratory. I have agreed that officers undertake a thorough assessment of the proposal compared with the design being developed for the new layout.

#### 4 **Programme**

- 4.1 The concerns raised by the petitioners, the 'Save Sloane Square Action Group', the final design assessments and options and funding implications will be the subject of a Key Decision Report to me next year. This is when a decision will be taken on whether or not to go ahead with implementation. There are a number of issues connected with the current unique stone surfacing design for the new layout, which will require the appointment of a stone specialist to advise on. Also the Council has approached William Pye, the renowned water sculptor for his ideas on water features for the Square. This means that it is unlikely that the Key Decision will be presented to me until at least Spring 2006.

**FOR INFORMATION**

**Councillor Daniel Moylan**  
**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Housing**  
**Policy and Transportation**