

7. Recommendations

The panel's recommendations are split into two categories:

- Milsom Street specific (sections 7.1 – 7.3)
- General recommendations for all future major projects (sections 7.4 – 7.10)

7.1 Recommendations specific to Milsom Street

In view of the strong public perception over the design of street furniture in Milsom Street, the panel recommends a considered design review of the scheme with an objective to reduce the visual clutter, quantity and prominence of street furniture in the street. The panel recommends that an independent consultancy team carry out this work. The public must be fully consulted (in accordance with recommendation 7.2 – below) regarding the proposed changes.

Particular areas for improvement are:

7.1.1 *Bollards*

We would like to see the bollards removed and replaced by an alternative design, such as the existing standard items, available at a reduced cost and used in other areas of Bath. They should be installed in fewer numbers, used only where absolutely necessary.

7.1.2 *Benches*

Taking account of criticism over materials, modernist design, lack of arm and back rests, and the money spent, in the fullness of time as they require repair or replacement, the benches should be removed and replaced by alternative seating in keeping with the historic status of Bath. Any new benches should be subject to a review of positioning before they are installed. For example, to reduce visual intrusion and increase usage, new benches should be repositioned further away from the main roadway.

7.1.3 *Bins*

Bins should be set back from the main thoroughfare to reduce visual prominence.

7.1.4 *Cycle Racks*

Cycle Racks should be moved to a less prominent position, so that when they are filled with parked bikes they are less of a visual intrusion on the street scene.

7.1.5 *Signage*

A review of signage should seek to remove obsolete posts and unnecessary signs which clutter the pavements.

7.1.6 *Parking*

Parking provision in Milsom Street needs to be thoroughly reviewed in line with original objectives of the scheme.

7.1.7 *Piazza*

Regarding the confusion surrounding pedestrian or vehicle priority at the bottom of Milsom Street and the high number of bollards currently installed to define roadway boundaries, the panel recommends a complete re-think of this aspect of the scheme. For example, implementation of a piazza area, where pedestrians have priority and vehicle access is hampered to the extent that drivers feel they are intruding on a pedestrian space would slow down traffic and create a safer space for pedestrians. This proposal is likely to require a reduction in the traffic moving down Milsom Street but in the fullness of time, combined with traffic reduction such a feature would add an important focal point to the scheme.

7.2 Estimated Costs of Milsom Street Recommendations

The table lists the recommendations for Milsom Street with associated estimated costs.

Recommendation	Estimated Costs			Estimated Quantity *1	Total Estimated Cost
	Removal & making good	Unit cost for new item	Installation cost		
7.1 Independent design review	n/a	£10,000	n/a	1	£10,000
7.1.1 Remove & replace bollards *2	£7,400 *3	£150 ea	£30 ea. *4	50	£16,400
7.1.2 Replace & reposition selective benches	£500 ea.	£500 ea.	£600 ea.	5	£8,000
7.1.3 Bins	£300 ea.	£400 ea.	£400 ea.	6	£6,600
7.1.4 Reposition Cycle Racks	£500 ea.	n/a	£800 ea.	4	£5,200
7.1.5 Signage review		Part of 7.1 above			
7.1.6 Parking review		Part of 7.1 above			
7.1.7 Piazza review & development					£50k–300k depending on scheme.

Notes

- *1 The actual quantity of work will be dependant on any recommendations that may be made as a result of the independent design review.
- *2 A specification to rectify the faults with the bollards is currently being finalised, once the faults are rectified a sum £15,770.00 will be paid to the supplier.
- *3 The sum is based on reinstating 40 vacated bollard sockets.
- *4 The sum assumes the existing sockets will be used, if the bollards are relocated a sum of £173 per bollard should be added.

7.3 Potential Source of Funding

With regard to the issue of funding, the Council's capital programme for Transportation is yet to be allocated for 2003/4. If the Council decided to carry out further works in Milsom Street, rather than other priorities, they could be funded from within that programme.

The timescale for reviewing the public realm and consultation on a Piazza idea may mean that there is little expenditure next year and it might be 2004/5 before there was any significant spend.

General Recommendations for all Future Major Projects

7.4 Consultation Methods

Consultation processes for future major projects affecting the public realm need to be improved. The panel makes a number of recommendations in this area under the following themes:

7.4.1 Independent Consultation

For consultation to make a successful contribution to projects, it should be conducted separately from the officers who are designing the scheme and initially, at least, would benefit from being undertaken independently by consultants with a proven capability of successful consultation. Analysis of consultation results needs to be objective and not carried out by the officers involved with the project. The aim would be to provide objective consultation rather than starting a consultation exercise by presenting the Council's pre-conceived ideas for a scheme.

7.4.2 Early Consultation

Engaging with consultees at an earlier stage should enhance the consultation process by engaging people with scheme development at a stage where they can influence its direction and comment on details. The project issues should be presented to the consultees so that they can provide views on the problems and support development of a range of potential solutions. In recommending this approach, the panel recognises that consultees expectations of what can be delivered will need to be managed, since raising expectations of what might be possible could lead to disappointment later.

7.4.3 Regular Consultation

This only serves to underline the importance of early, regular and consistent consultation sessions run independently of the project team. Scheme design should only be pursued after public consultation has set the direction for a project. As projects progress into a detailed design phase, the role of project officers would become greater. Consultation should include the views of experts, the general public, other council departments, and local interest/stakeholder groups.

7.4.4 Documentation

Consultation processes and outcomes should be documented and published.

7.4.5 Context

Consultation for a specific scheme should be carried out within a framework of the 'bigger picture'. For example, there was genuine confusion over the context of Milsom & Green street works being required to support the Priority Access point (busgate) nearby at the end of Bond Street. Information to consultees should include the context of the project in relation to wider schemes. Future schemes need to look wider than just their immediate area of impact so that schemes are take account of alterations to traffic volumes elsewhere.

7.5 Project Management

The panel recommends that there should be greater emphasis on a project management approach separate to the detailed aspects of scheme development. A project management function should provide more objectivity and be independent from the design, consultation or implementation resource. It can plan resource allocation (people and finances) and bring a pro-active approach to planning key stages and deliver benefits in making sufficient time to oversee consultation and respond to outcomes. Overall, a project management function can balance the various conflicting requirements of a major project and maintain a long-term view of the desired outcome.

7.6 Notes of Meetings

In reviewing the notes of meetings and seeking to understand how key design or financial decisions of the Milsom/Green St. scheme were arrived at, the panel found the task difficult due to a lack of recorded detail of discussions, recommendations or decisions of the Working Party. It is therefore recommended that notes and minutes of major project meetings should include much greater detail, particularly in recording the rationale for key development and financial decisions.

The recommendations relating to project management (7.3 above) should support the allocation of suitable resource to projects to service this role.

7.7 Decision Making

The panel found evidence of a great deal of confusion over the definition of Member and officer roles and responsibilities around decision making on the Milsom/Green Street Project.

The panel recommends that there needs to be a clearer definition of member and senior officer (heads of service and directors) responsibilities for decisions and line management on projects. The new political arrangements of an executive cabinet with designated portfolio members, balanced with overview and scrutiny panels should provide improved clarification of roles compared to the old committee decisions.

The Major Projects overview & scrutiny panel would, itself, like to clarify its own role in supporting key decisions on future major projects. It suggests that it could work more closely with the executive in formulating the proposed direction of a project to take regular updates, scrutinise decisions and report back to the executive member. The executive member should remain as the designated portfolio holder, to give leading direction for the project and be held to account.

7.8 Financial Management

Whilst the panel was able to clarify the costs of the Milsom/Green Street scheme, it found difficulty in assessing whether the end result justified the money spent. There was no information in original project documentation or officer presentations that showed any 'cost versus benefit' analysis had been undertaken to demonstrate the value of the scheme.

The panel recommends that future major projects should include a greater emphasis on undertaking a thorough cost justification exercise. A corporate cost/benefit analysis procedure should be developed to support this. Benchmarking of similar schemes around the UK would also be of benefit in order to demonstrate that council resources are being deployed effectively.

Responsibility for such work would lie with the project management role (see recommendation 7.3) that would hold a responsibility for financial management of the project.

7.9 Streetscape Research and Guidance Documents

Regarding the various streetscape design guidelines produced by the Council over the period of the CI:TE project (Bath Streetscape Strategy and Manual, Bath Historical Streetscape Survey and Public Realm Strategy), the Panel asks the Executive to undertake an investigation of how these documents were commissioned, researched and what they cost, so that use of resources can be maximised and future strategy be developed coherently for the Council.

7.10 Maintenance

The Council should ensure the long-term return on investment in street works is not lost by ensuring that there is effective budgetary provision for street cleaning, repairs and maintenance after improvements have been implemented.