

ST GEORGE'S STREET, CANTERBURY

PROPOSED PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

The starting point



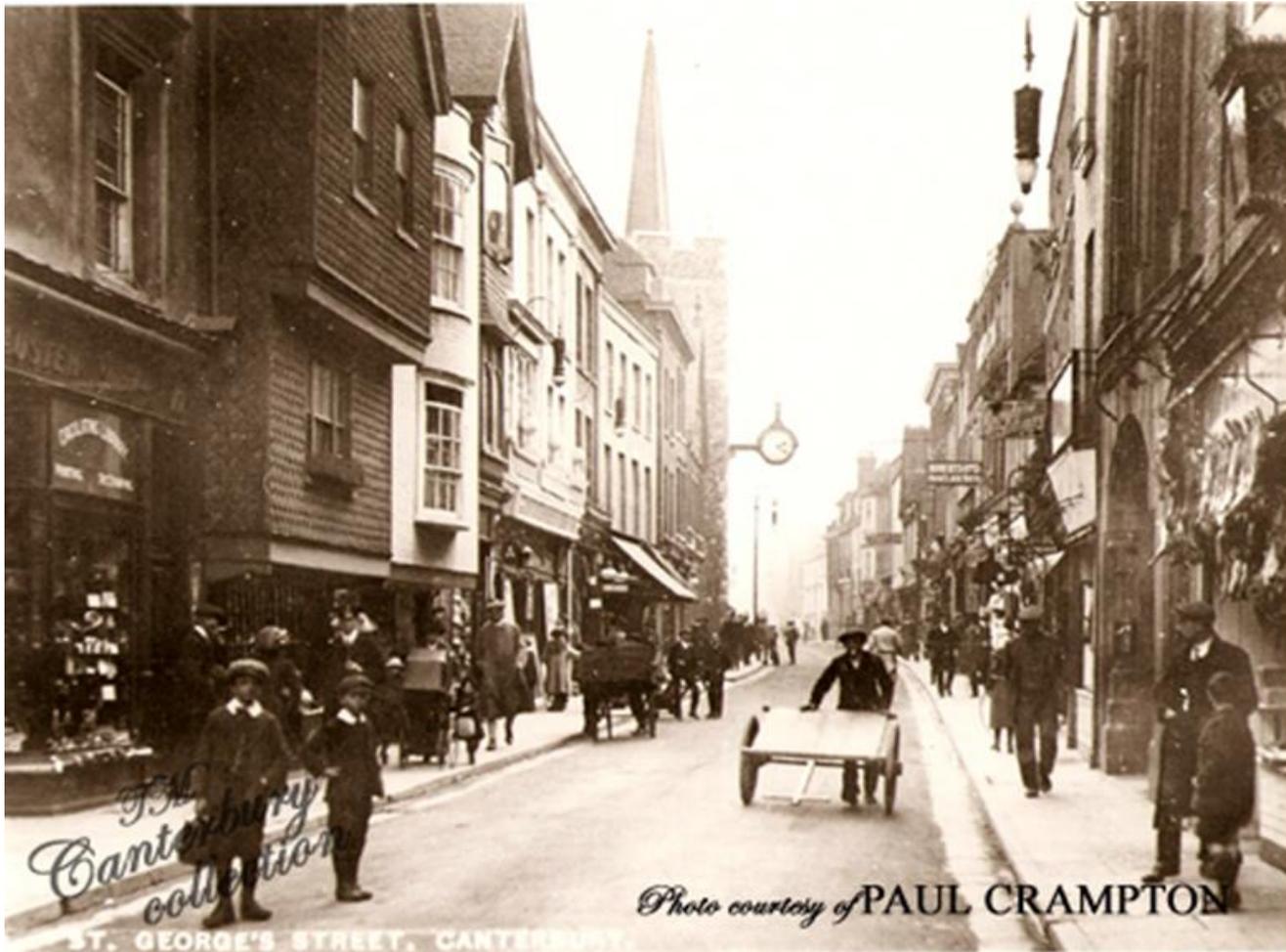
Understanding the past is an important prelude to good design. In the Canterbury context the starting point is often looking back in history to understand why a place is like it is and what existed before. We strive to build on the historical strength of the city in an attempt to reinforce its special sense of place and individual identity. This is the Buttermarket in the city. Note how simple granite sett paving provides a unifying floorscape without visually competing with the enclosing architecture. This is a wonderful space to be in – we need to understand why.



Christopher Marlowe, 1585. Unknown artist.
"The Corpus Christi Portrait." Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

The Elizabethan playwright and poet Christopher Marlowe was baptized in the Church of St George The Martyr in 1564, born in the same year as Shakespeare. The present day clock tower is all that remains of the church.

His father, John Marlowe was a shoemaker with a shop in St Georges Street close to where Fenwicks department store now stands. Marlowe is known to have greatly influenced Shakespeare and recent research has confirmed they collaborated to a much greater extent than first thought.



Photograph of St Georges Street looking back towards the clock tower of the Church of St George The Martyr taken around early 1900.

Note the narrow width of the street and the strength of enclosure provided by the predominantly three storey buildings. Shops at ground level and living accommodation above.

Each building is individual but by respecting a set of design principles all come together to produce a wonderfully rich and varied townscape.



Early 1900s view looking towards the Westgate Towers with the landmark of the St Georges Church on the right. Not an inch of space wasted and not a motor vehicle in sight.

Projecting upper stories of buildings, lamp posts, awnings and signs make for a visually rich street scene. The full extent of St Georges Church is visible from this viewpoint.

The Baedeker Raids 1942



German bombing raids targeting English Cathedral cities took place in May / June 1942.

The aftermath of one such raid on 31 May / 1 June is shown in the attached photograph.

The triangular pediment above the façade of the Marks and Spencer building can be clearly seen in the centre of the photograph.



The Marks and Spencer building along with the tower of St Georges Church were two of the original buildings to survive the bombing raid.

Certain buildings survived but were unsafe and had to be later demolished. It is claimed that a copper roof saved the Marks and Spencer store from the incendiary bombs.

The Corn Exchange at the Longmarket was a great loss to the city that was never replaced. If it existed today perhaps it would house an indoor market?

Today



The view today shows the Marks and Spencer building flanked by 1950s buildings. The redevelopment was part of Architect Hugh Wilson's post-war plan for rebuilding this part of the city. Described by critics as anonymous 1950s shops.

The one exception being the David Greig shop now Superdrug designed by Architects Robert Pain and Partners in 1953. The street was widened to cater for through traffic, after all it was the main High Street.

Missing seats, puddles of water where the surface has subsided and telephone booths retained only for advertising add to the run-down, shabby appearance of the street.



Over-bearing trees cast heavy shade and lift the paved surface.

The patched paving is characterised by too many different materials and colours.

Unused telephone kiosks blight the streetscene. Adhoc market stalls on non-market days add to the general random, disorganised appearance of the street.

Track Record



The City Council has experience of public realm interventions in the city which have been successful in increasing visitor numbers.

This photograph shows Palace Street. Space for vehicles has been reduced at the expense of space for people. Outside sitting space has been created and trees have been planted.

The pedestrian-friendly street packed full of small independent shops now extends from the High Street to Norhtgate.

What others have done: Southgate Street, Bath



We have investigated what others have done. We particularly liked this approach used in Bath. Trees, seating and lighting located down the centre of the street with one type of natural stone paving for the whole space between buildings. Flag paving for the footways and smaller unit paving for the centre of the street. The design restraint is commendable. The absence of clutter creates an impression of spaciousness. This is similar to the material chosen for the Whitefriars Shopping Centre. We hope to achieve something similar in St Georges Street.

Our Vision

- To create a central city space which is adaptable and flexible to enable a wide range of activities to take place.
- A space which is attractive, safe and clean in which people are attracted to shop, meet and linger, both during the day and evening (night time economy).
- Contemporary materials to provide an impression of quality and spaciousness.

Market thoughts

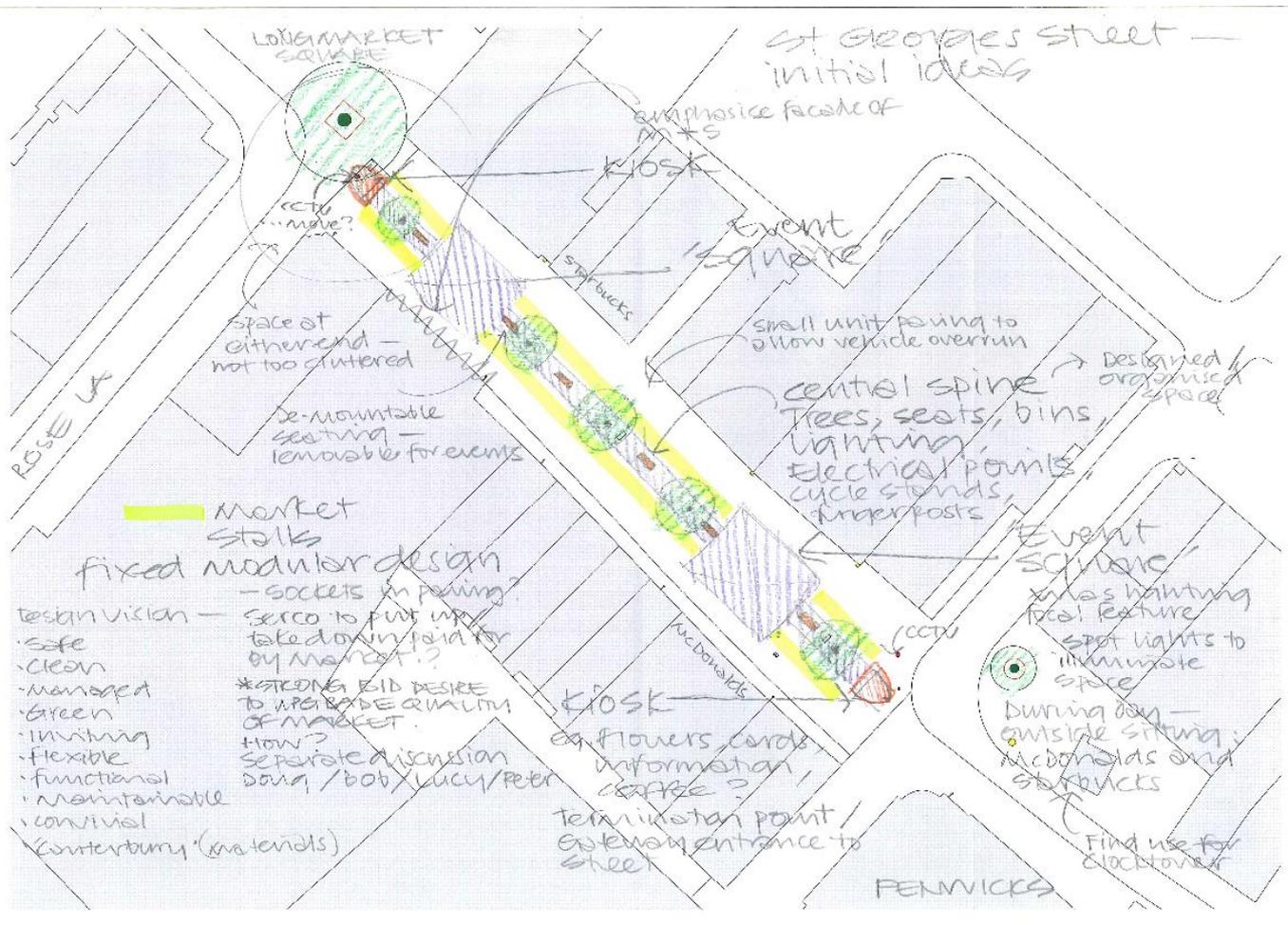


St Georges Street ... Canterbury's



We gave some thought to the market in St Georges Street. Canterbury presents the wonderful three day Dane John Food Festival in late September each year which is increasing in popularity. Other towns and cities have used food to build a national and international reputation. Could Canterbury sustain a food market once or several times a week? Would a night food market be popular? Such a market could add colour and vitality to create another destination in the city.

Early concept thinking



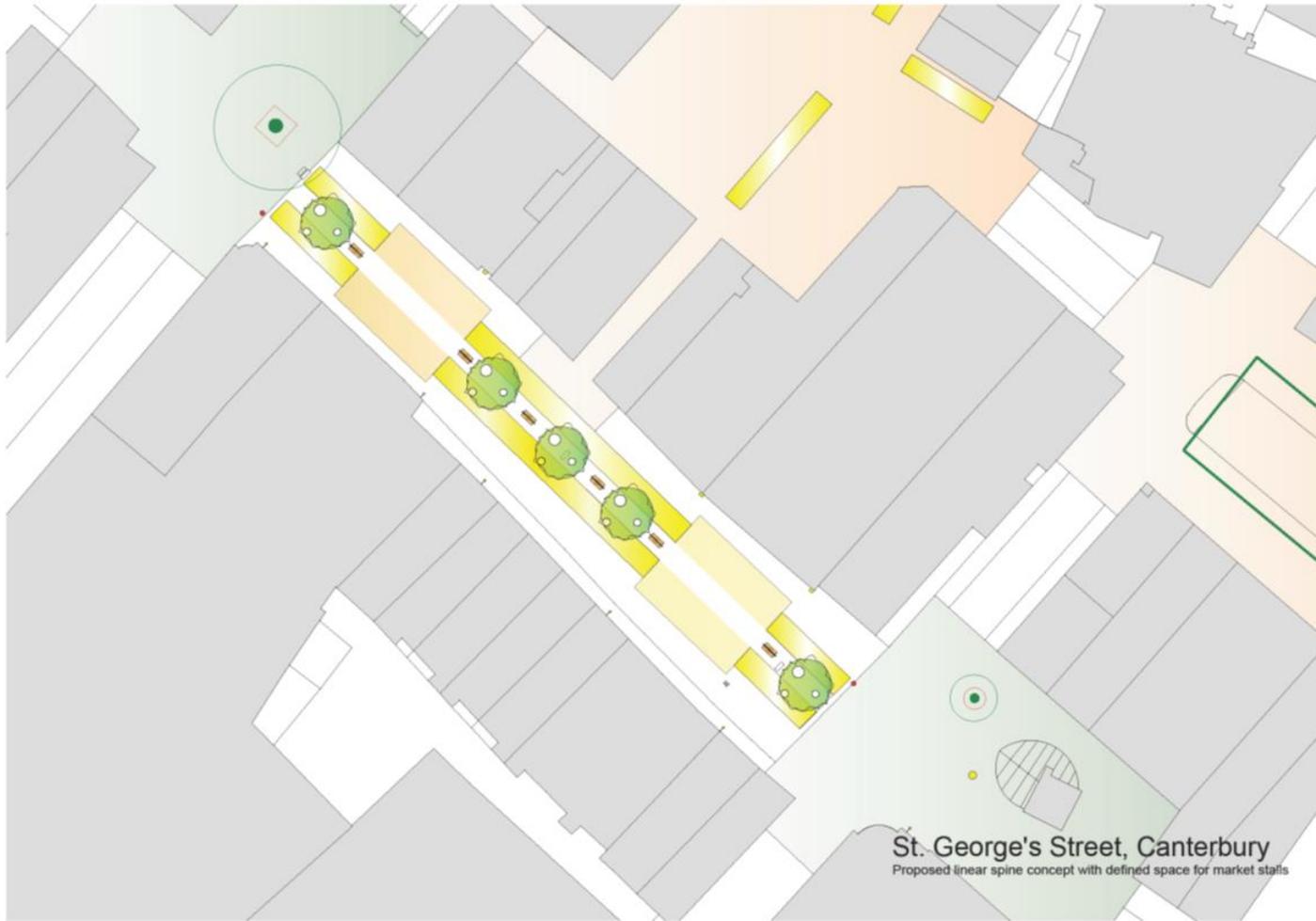
Our very early thoughts on the layout design of the street were circulated to obtain feedback.

Thinking beyond the boundary



Although we only have funding for the street between the Clocktower and the Longmarket at the present time we looked at the spaces between buildings surrounding the site. Paving design at both the Clocktower and the Longmarket could remove the dominance of the road and create pedestrian squares which vehicles are allowed to pass through at certain times of the day. The squares at Iron Bar Lane and Canterbury Lane are presently used solely for deliveries and disabled parking. Could they be used for occasional weekly markets to relieve the pressure on St Georges Street? The potential of combining static squares and linear streets to create an interesting sequence of spaces for this part of the city deserves further investigation.

Design proposal



Two 'Event Squares' in front of Marks and Spencer and Poundland.

A central line of trees, seats, lighting and signs. Designated space for market stalls indicated by the yellow coloured rectangles.

The street will be designed to look equally attractive with and without the market in place.

Key features

- New paving and drainage - all at the same level
- Two event spaces (Xmas lights above)
- Central spine of trees, seats, electrical points, bins, lighting, cycle racks and signage to create a feeling of space
- Designated space for market stalls (part of paving design)



Sketch outside Poundland event space looking towards the Longmarket. New paving across the street with manageable new trees, furniture and lighting located down the centre. Possible feature spot-lights for the two event spaces. A brighter street both during the day and night which will feel uncluttered and spacious.

Outline project programme



- **Public consultation:** October 24th 2016 – 9th December 2016 (6 weeks)
- **Finalise design:** December 2016 – March 2017
- **Submission of planning application:** March 2017
- **Start on site:** July 2017 with completion November 2017 in time for Christmas

Statue of Marlowe?



The new statue of Geoffrey Chaucer at the junction of Best Lane and the High Street was unveiled on 12 October 2016. It has attracted a lot of interest. Canterbury Commemoration Society organised and funded the design, creation and installation of the statue and have gifted it to the city. When Best Lane was repaved two years earlier the City Council laid a concrete plinth beneath the paving to receive the structure.

The tourism industry in Stratford Upon Avon is almost wholly based on Shakespeare. Do we in Canterbury make the most of Marlowe?

Would a statue to commemorate Christopher Marlowe add to character and importance of St Georges Street and draw attention to its past history? Should a base be laid beneath the new paving in readiness?