

# Thompson Square Alternatives Working Paper

## 1. Issue

An integral part of the concept design for the Windsor Bridge replacement project is selecting an appropriate treatment of Thompson Square that responds to the values, opportunities and challenges presented by this unique location.

This working paper documents the process used by Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) to shortlist possible treatments for the Square and access connections to and from the bridge.

## 2. Background

In response to the significant heritage and social values of Thompson Square, the project team has developed urban design principles to guide the design process for the Square and the bridge replacement project. These are to:

- Protect and interpret the heritage values of Thompson Square and Windsor in general.
- Maximise the available open space in Thompson Square by reducing the road corridor footprint.
- Define a preferred form and character for Thompson Square based on a range of appropriate uses.
- Enhance access around and through Thompson Square.
- Improve the amenity of Thompson Square and the surrounding areas.

The project team has developed a series of possible options based on these principles which are presented in this working paper.

The project team met with Hawkesbury City Council officers on 21 March to present and discuss the possible options for Thompson Square. Feedback from Council on 3 April was incorporated into the options assessment.

In order to achieve the objectives stated above, the focus in considering the best outcome for Thompson Square is on access both into and around the Square.

The options we generated focussed on the location and alignment of the shared path associated with the proposed bridge and access to the river foreshore via The Terrace. Secondary footpaths through the Square and other parts of the park have not been fully explored in the options as the detailed design of the final form of Thompson Square will need to be by Hawkesbury City Council.

Other measures to increase the area of green open space in Thompson Square include backfilling the existing cutting on Bridge Street, narrowing the pavement and removing the bus bay on the road on the western edge of Thompson Square. These are all common to the options presented below.

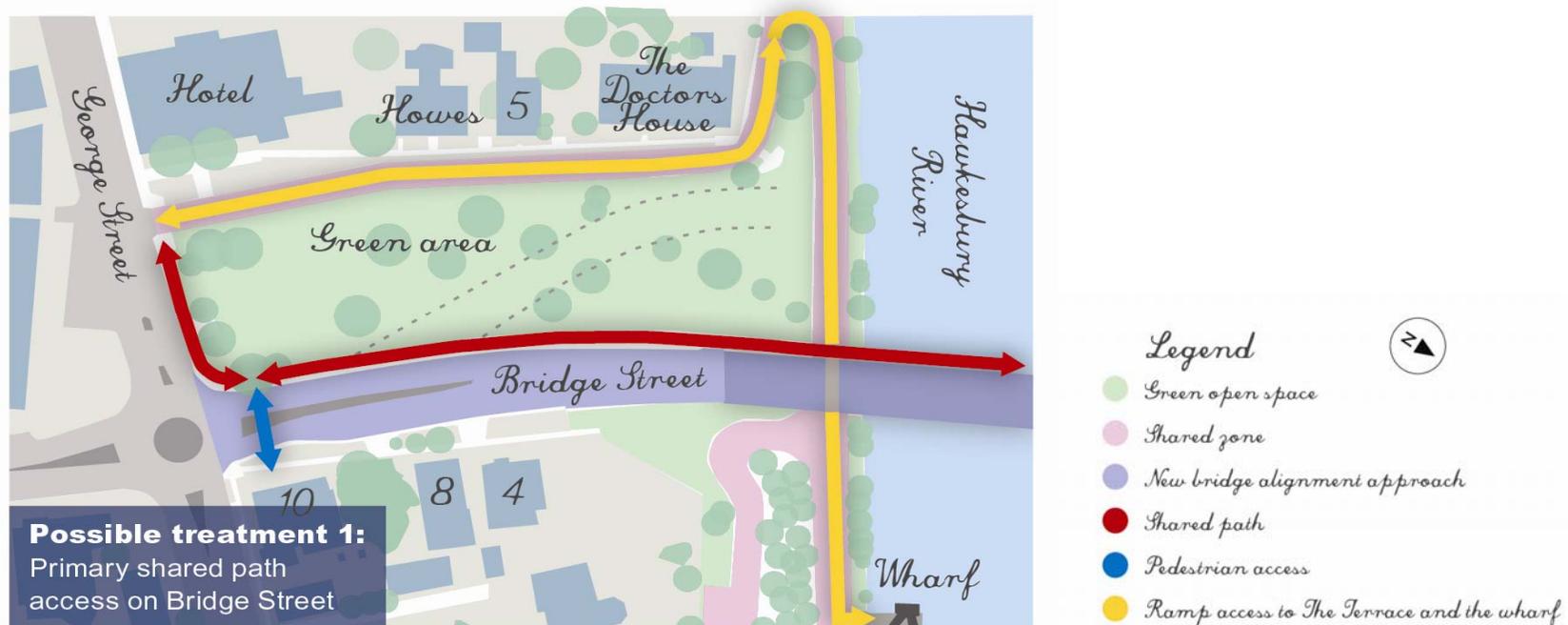
Access for people who are mobility impaired between George Street and The Terrace and the River foreshore is proposed by using Thompson Square road, past the Doctor's House to The Terrace. This arrangement is proposed to be a shared zone where slow moving vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians share the same pavement area. The posted speed limit on a Shared Zone roadway is 10km per hour. Some of the options show an alternative ramp access within Thompson Square

which connects an internal path to The Terrace. This alternative requires a large footprint that would reduce the area of green open space.

RMS will now present these options to the community for review and comment.

### **3. Comment**

Five possible options for access through Thompson Square and the constraints for each were examined. A summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each option follows.

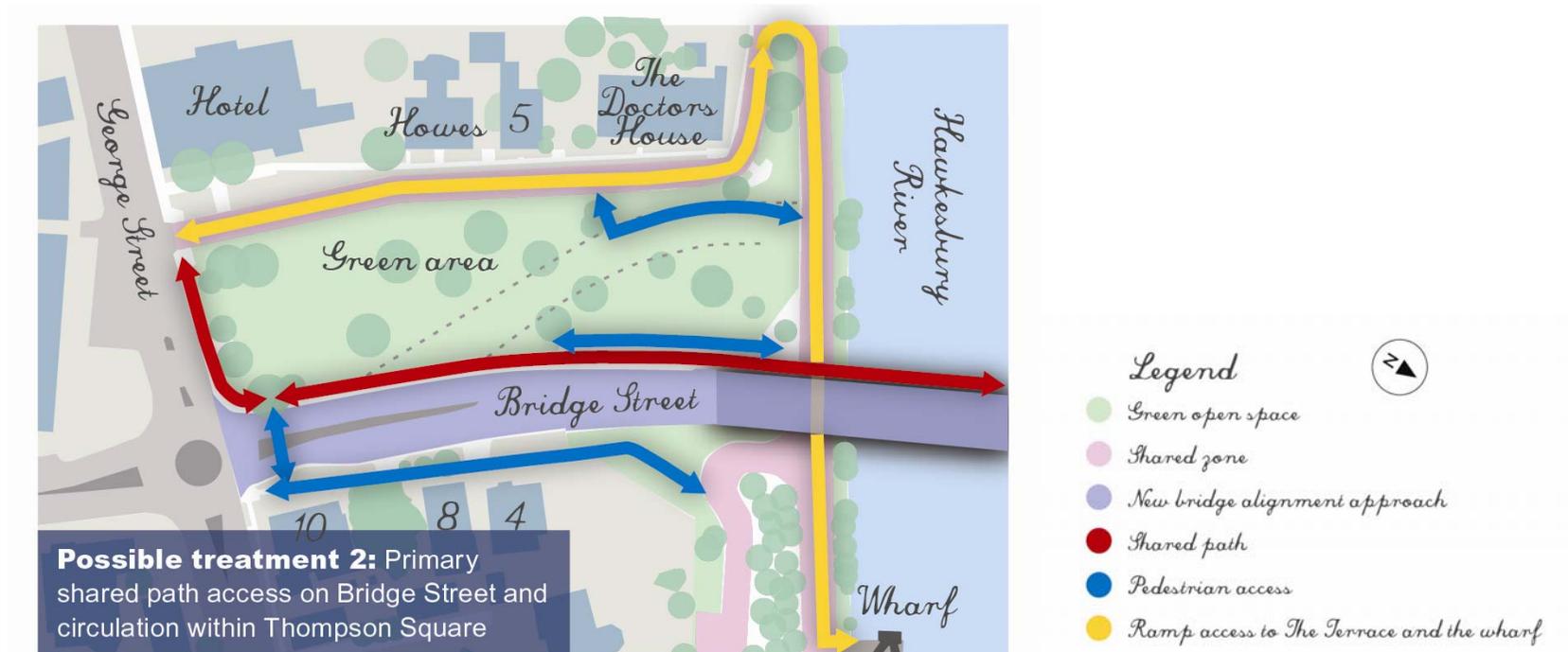


**Advantages:**

1. The shared path provides a logical and direct connection to the bridge from the George Street and Bridge Street intersection.
2. Contiguous green open space in the Square is provided. This is helped by aligning the path with the edge of the Square.
3. The shared path alignment is easily constructed adjacent to the roadway reducing the construction footprint in the Square.
4. Access to and from the properties on the eastern side of the Square across Bridge Street is helped by this alignment of the shared path.
5. The shared path provides a suitable alignment for both pedestrians and cyclists.

**Disadvantages:**

1. This creates a relatively steep grade (up to 8%) down to the bridge and this is not desirable for mobility impaired access.
2. The access from the area around the intersection on George Street, near the Macquarie Arms Hotel, to the bridge, is not direct.
3. Access for mobility impaired people down to The Terrace and River foreshore is restricted to the road on the western edge of The Square (passing the Doctor's House).
4. The footpath on the eastern side of the Square between Bridge Street and the adjoining properties will not be suitable for mobility impaired access.
5. The George and Bridge Streets roundabout is a difficult crossing point for pedestrians and cyclists.

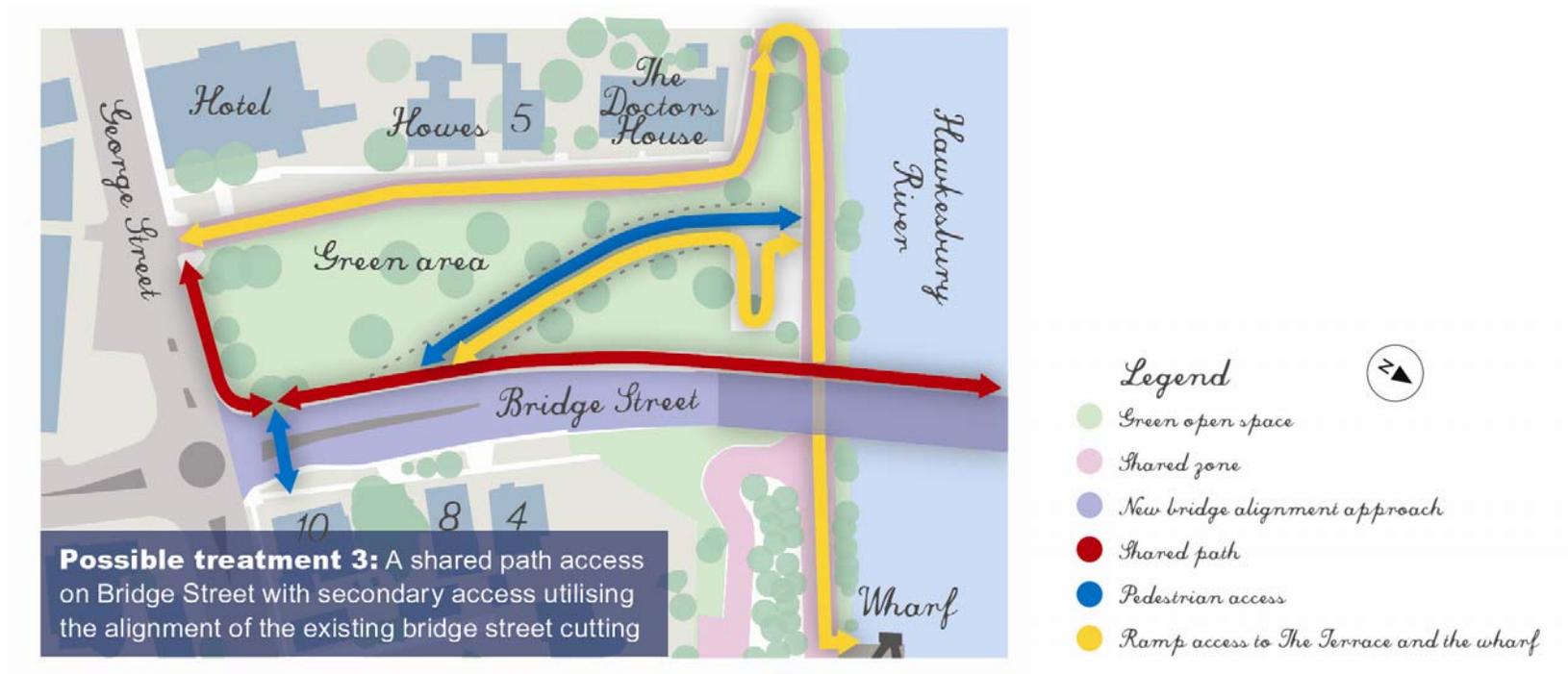


**Advantages:**

1. The stairs adjacent to the bridge abutment provide direct access to The Terrace and the river foreshore and assist in integrating the bridge abutment into the Square.
2. Stairs adjacent to the retaining wall next to the Doctor's House would provide access for pedestrians from the road in the Square down to The Terrace and River foreshore.
3. Option 1 advantages 1 to 5 also apply to this option.

**Disadvantages:**

1. This option does not improve access for mobility impaired people to The Terrace and the river, over that described in Option 1.
2. Option 1 disadvantages 1 to 5 apply to this option.



**Advantages:**

1. The secondary path provides direct access through the Square to The Terrace and to the river foreshore.
2. The secondary path provides opportunity to interpret the heritage alignment of the existing Bridge Street approach to the bridge through Thompson Square.
3. Option 1 advantages 1, 3, 4 and 5 also apply to this option

**Disadvantages:**

1. A secondary path cuts across the Square disrupting the contiguous green open space between George Street and The Terrace.
2. A secondary path would require complex grading in order to meet mobility impaired access guidelines.
3. The ramp access on the secondary path adjacent to The Terrace both physically and visually separates The Terrace from the Square.
4. Option 1 disadvantages 1, 2, 4 and 5 also apply to this option.

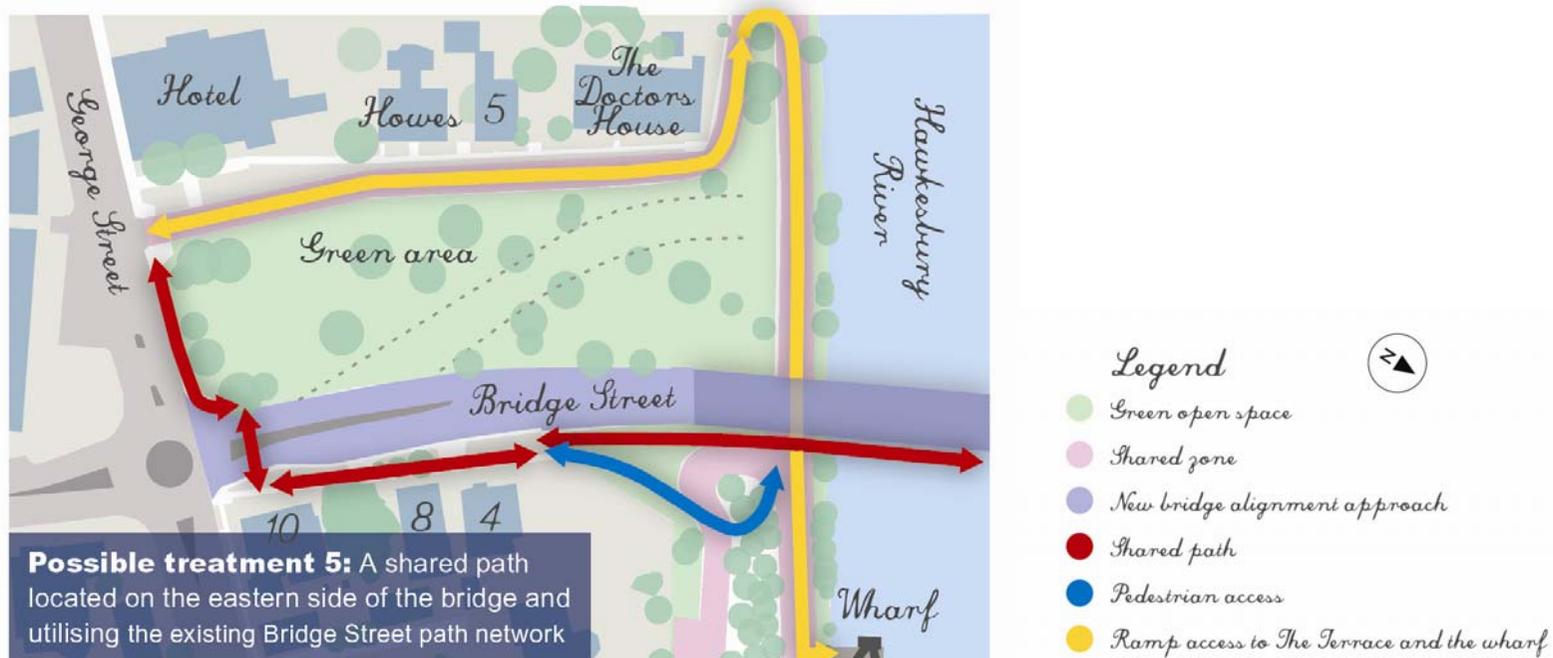


**Advantages:**

1. A shared path provides more direct access to the George Street intersection near the Macquarie Arms Hotel.
2. Pedestrian and cyclist amenity is improved as it is partially located within the Square and away from traffic on Bridge Street.
3. Both paths provide some opportunity to interpret the earlier/historic alignments of roads through the Square.
4. The secondary path provides more direct access through the Square to The Terrace and the river foreshore.

**Disadvantages:**

1. Direct shared path access is not provided to the George Street / Bridge Street intersection to avoid duplicating the shared path in Thompson Square.
2. The shared path alignment is not in a typical location being away from the roadside.
3. The shared and secondary paths cut across the Square disrupting the contiguous green open space between George Street and The Terrace.
4. The shared path alignment is less easily constructed away from the roadway and increases construction in the Square.
5. Both paths would require complex grading to meet mobility impaired access guidelines.
6. Ramp access in Thompson Square physically and visually separates The Terrace from the Square.



**Advantages:**

1. The shared path maximises the use of the area between the approach road and buildings on eastern side of the Square and maximises.
2. The shared path provides a logical and direct connection to the bridge from the George Street / Bridge Street intersection.
3. The contiguous green open space in the Square is maximised by aligning the path with the eastern edge of the Square.
4. The shared path alignment is easily constructed adjacent to the roadway.
5. Access to and from the properties on the eastern side of the Square across Bridge Street is helped by this alignment of the shared path.
6. The shared path provides a suitable alignment for both pedestrians and cyclists.

**Disadvantages:**

1. The relatively steep grade (up to 8%) down to the bridge is not desirable for providing mobility impaired access.
2. Access from the area around the Macquarie Arms Hotel to the bridge is not direct and requires people to cross the George Street / Bridge Street intersection.
3. Access to Macquarie Park on the northern foreshore requires crossing to the opposite side of the intersection.
4. The George and Bridge streets roundabout is a difficult crossing point for pedestrians and cyclists.

## **The way forward**

The next step is to seek input from the community, heritage groups and agencies on options for Thompson Square, including the possible options presented in this working paper. The input received from this process will start the discussion on the final layout for Thompson Square.

The final layout that is selected will contain elements that will be refined and optimised as the design progresses. These include:

- Landform
  - o Appropriate reshaping of the landform of the Square
- Road Treatments
  - o Appropriate alignment, width and surface treatments
- Thompson Square Elements
  - o Appropriate key element locations e.g. amphitheatre and viewing deck
- Paths
  - o Appropriate alignment and finishes
- Stairs
  - o Appropriate alignment and finishes
- Barriers and Balustrades
  - o Appropriate arrangements and materials
- Lighting (If required)
  - o Appropriate locations, sizes and design form

Further input from the community and government agencies will be sought as the design of these elements is developed.

The project team will continue to develop the concept design for the bridge and undertake a range of environmental investigations to input into the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will be placed on public exhibition later in 2012 and comments received will be considered in a submissions report. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will consider these comments before making a decision on whether to approve the project.

Discussions with the community, heritage groups and agencies are a vital part of the renewal of Thompson Square. Consultation with these groups regarding the renewal of the Square have now started and RMS is committed to working closely with them as the project progresses to ensure the best possible outcome.

If approved, the conditions of approval are likely to include the development of a plan for Thompson Square. To this end, an indicative design for Thompson Square will be included in the environmental impact statement. It is important that the community and heritage groups know that the design in the EIS will not necessarily be the design finally chosen for Thompson Square. The ongoing consultation process for the final treatment of Thompson Square will continue beyond the display of the EIS.