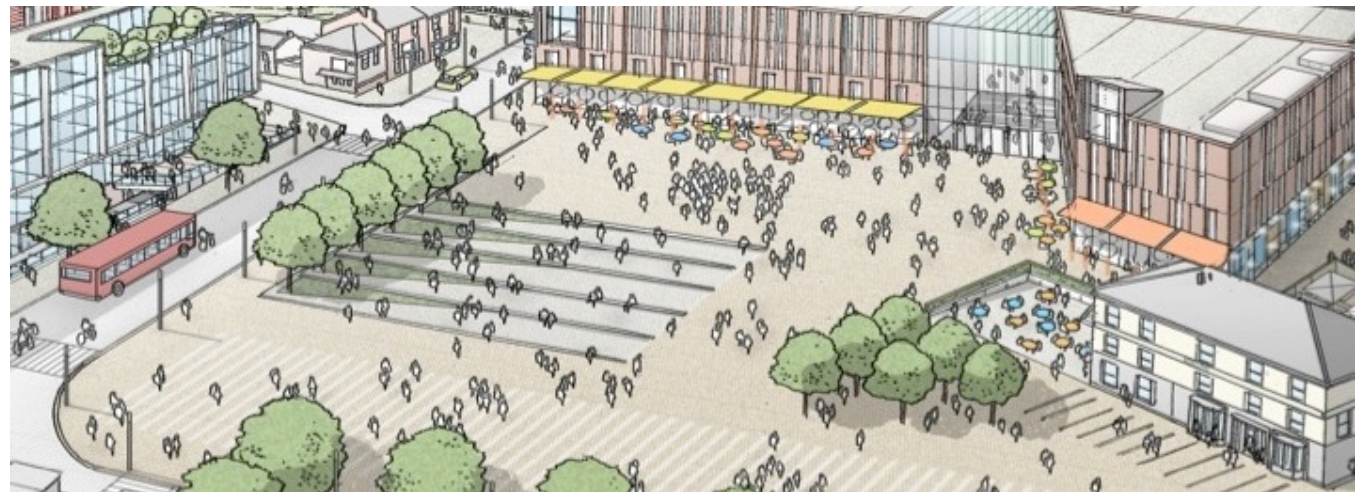
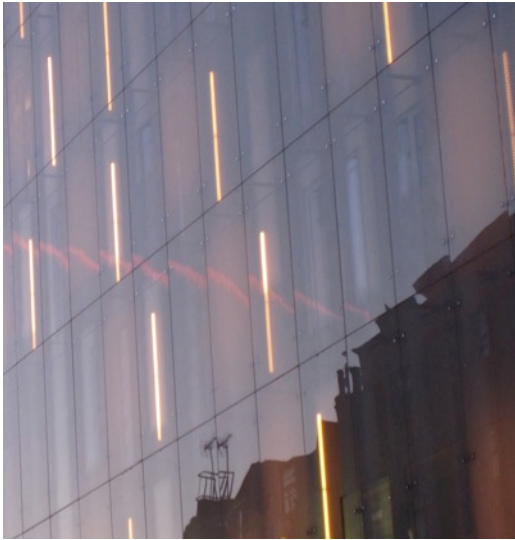


# A New Square for the University of Central Lancashire

Feedback from Engagement Workshops May 2015





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## 1. Purpose

In March 2015 I was invited to respond to the Masterplan report and explore what form the proposed new square for the University of Central Lancashire could take, in terms of who would use it, and for what purpose.

Working with a team of facilitators we created a series of structured workshops, which engaged with the potential future users and animators of the proposed new square, enabling them to record their initial responses and thoughts.

This report correlates and structures the feedback received and has identified a number of core areas: the surrounding buildings, the square, its edges and animation, the role of the Adelphi, and future management of the square.

This document can be seen as a supplement to the Allies and Morrison Masterplan report, as well as informing the University's newly formed Culture & Events Calendar Group and the Preston Cultural Framework Board, which will all have an important part to play in the future design, support and programming of the square.



## 2. Introduction

# Creating a new square is a very large-scale place making exercise

The exciting proposal for a new square for the University of Central Lancashire provides a unique opportunity for the University and the City. The possibilities as to what shape and purpose this space could provide are seemingly endless.

There are many exemplary examples of squares across the world some have been there for hundreds of years others a much shorter time. What makes this project stand out from those is that it will be a significant city public space managed by a university.

Within this context it is important to carefully consider what type of square the university wants to create and for what purpose. It will not only have the potential to create a front door and showcase to the University but it will also provide one of the gate ways to the city centre as identified on the Preston City Centre Plan 2013

The City has a long tradition of using its public squares and parks for festivals and events framed every 20 years by the Guild which encompasses the whole city and raises expectations for the future. The city has now branded itself as Preston Guild City and has a greater understanding of the value of culture to the city centre economy. It's leading on a number of initiatives including working towards holding a Lancashire wide Arts Festival every two years in the city centre with the university being a key partner. This is just one example of the cities and universities joint event calendar.

Creating a new square is a very large-scale place making exercise, and its success will be dependent on the collaboration of many different disciplines in design, cultural and events management, community leadership and marketing.

# A New Public Square at the Heart of the Campus



## 3. Masterplan Key Points for the Square

Key points selected from the Masterplan document that have been used to aid discussion with all the workshop groups.

A new public space at the heart of the campus.

A new public square for the north of the city

The relationship between the new square and existing and proposed new public spaces in the city centre: the Flag Market, the Covered Market, the proposed new square in front of the Bus Station.

Create enclosure to spaces with active and accessible uses.

Embed a high quality environment.

The new square will provide an eclectic mix of opportunities for students and staff, creating space to meet between lectures, for local business and residents to enjoy and spend time in, an arrival point for visitors, and an area to host a range of public events.

To deliver this hub of activity the buildings framing the square are as important as the design of the space itself.



## 90 people attended the separate workshops



### 4. Square Engagement Workshops

One of the most important foundations of place making is to have buy-in from the communities who will be using, populating and animating that space. This becomes even more essential when creating a totally new place such as the University's new square.

Once the masterplan architects had proposed a new square for the university, the question was asked, 'what could that new square be and who would use it?'

In order to gain a greater insight into this question and to identify some answers, a series of engagement workshops were set up to attract a broad cross-section of potential users and to acknowledge existing expertise in the University and the City. These were led by facilitators

with expertise in architecture, public arts, events and facility management.

The exercise was designed to be inclusive as well as to inform the creation of a clear brief for the design of the new square and the surrounding buildings. This allowed the participants to engage in the design process and for the team to gain new knowledge about the space and its potential use.

Five different groups totaling 90 people attended the separate workshops during March 2015. These included:

UCLan Staff - both academic from a range of disciplines and support staff, UCLan students - from a range of disciplines, cultures, and age groups.



Cultural sector Preston - including managers of arts venues and events.  
Hutton Grammar School - 6<sup>th</sup> form students

the different seasons of the year. The activities also highlighted the relationships that they had with UCLan.

Each workshop began with an introduction to the Masterplan, focusing on the new square proposal as well as its relationship to the other squares in Preston. They were also introduced to other national squares, which had similar physical characteristics, such as being surrounded by roads on three sides and on a slope. A site visit to the proposed square followed this introduction, which enabled the participants to gain an understanding of the scale and context of the project.

Finally, working in groups they were asked to respond to a number of tasks, which they recorded on the plans of the proposed square through drawings and notes. Eighteen plans were completed which captured the discussions and the observations of the groups. The workshops highlighted the way the different groups viewed their proposed use of the square as well as their perceptions of it according to

UCLan Staff  
UCLan Students  
Neighbours  
Cultural Sector Preston  
Hutton Grammar School



into two main approaches: one based around the physical design of the space and the other on proposed social uses for the new square and surrounding buildings. Though this gives a rather simplistic view of some of the design options and problems to be addressed, as many overlap both categories, it does provide a focused list of possibilities for some of the categories.

The core areas are as follows:

- Surrounding Buildings
- The Square
- The Edge of the Square
- Animation
- The Adelphi Pub
- Management of the Square

## 5. The Core Areas

Using the captured information we have identified a number of issues and questions about the different proposals that arose across all the workshops, as well as some interesting singular perspectives from specific groups.

We have collated these observations and discussions into six core areas, which in turn can be broken down





## 5.1 The Surrounding Buildings

The Masterplan consultation document outlines some important considerations when designing the new space. One that stands out is that, the buildings framing the square are as important as the space itself<sup>9</sup>. This can refer to what activities they hold, as well as their appearance as an anchor for the square. There are already squares in Preston that have significant pieces

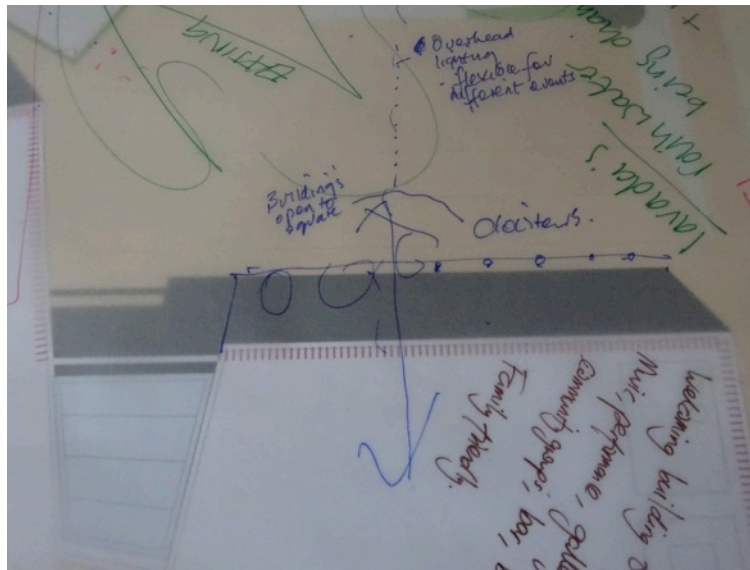
of architecture as their anchor buildings, such as the Grade I listed Harris Museum and Art Gallery on the Flag Market, or the internationally recognised and listed Brutalist Preston Bus Station with its proposed new square in front of it.

The city also has other more contemporary outstanding buildings. These would include the visitor centre at Brockholes and the Avenham Park Pavilion, both RIBA competition winners. A new building built at the north of the square needs to be significant and to be able to hold its own amongst the family of significant buildings already in the city. This will assist in the square becoming a destination for visitors.

The overriding comment that came from all five groups was that the buildings forming the northern edge should be an interface between the square, the public and the University.

## The Surrounding Buildings

## The suggestions that people made included



### Physical Aspects

*The architectural edge of the buildings should be permeable, perhaps with arches similar to cloisters or arcades, which allow inside and outside activities to take place all year round.*

*Covered awnings along the edge of the building.*

*The building should also interact with St. Peters Square and St. Peters Street, behind, and not be designed as the back or service entrance.*

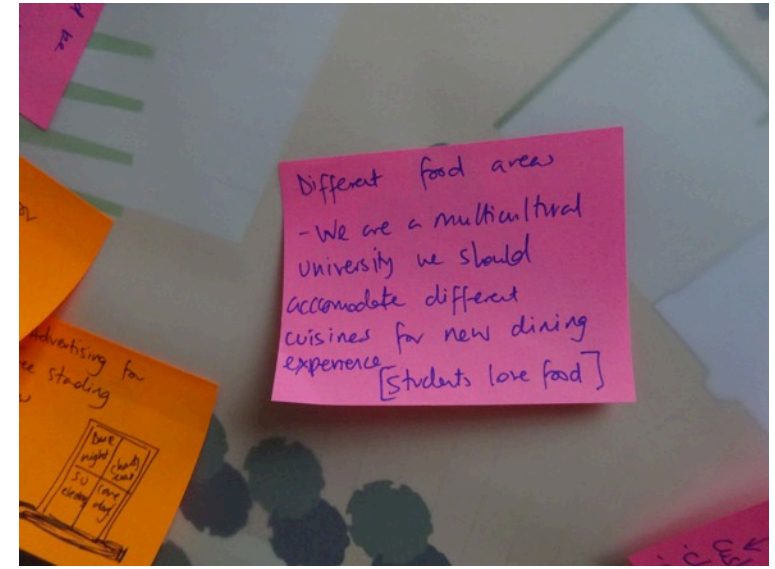
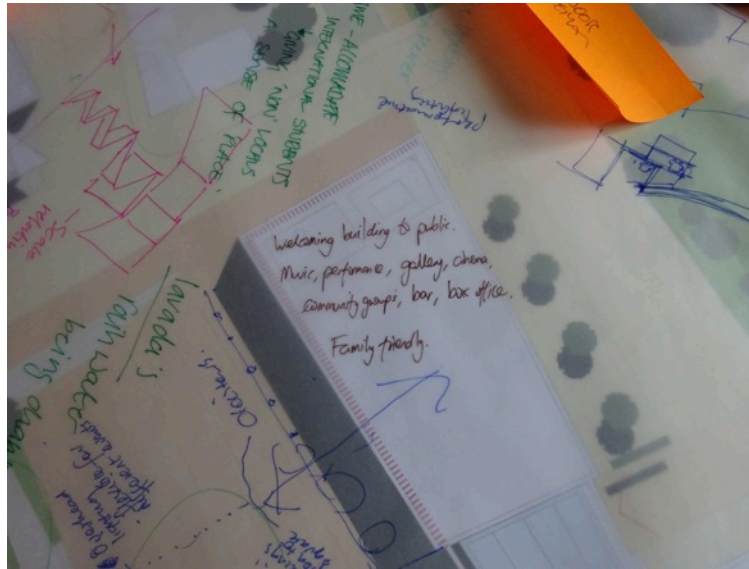
*The buildings should not act as a barrier to the rest of the campus, and people should be able to pass through them on route to other places*

*(N.B. according to analysis of climate records from the Met Office, the city has received, on average, 153.2 days of rain a year with an average rain fall of 103.36cm, since 1981)*



## The Surrounding Buildings

## The suggestions that people made included



### Social Aspects

*There were a lot of suggestions about what should happen on the ground floor of the buildings, with a consensus between all groups for the need for the buildings to be the front door and a showcase for the University.*

*The ground floor of the buildings should contain active spaces.*

*People wanted to see on public display, the work from across the University, that the students and staff create.*

*The university does not have any of the following as stand-alone facilities that can be directly accessed by the public from the street and which many Universities of a similar size have.*

- Studio theatre,
- Small cinema,
- Exhibitions space/ gallery
- Conference facility.







## 5.2 The Square

As the Masterplan document states, this would be an additional square to the ones already in the city, two of which already have significant buildings as their focus, as in the Flag Market and the to-be-developed new square in front of Preston Bus Station. Plans for the renovation of the Covered Market could also provide a multi-use covered space at the heart of the city.

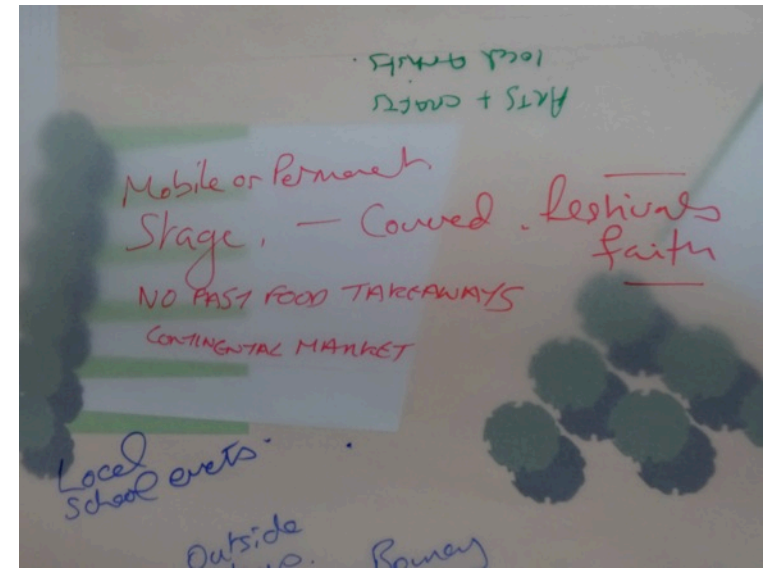
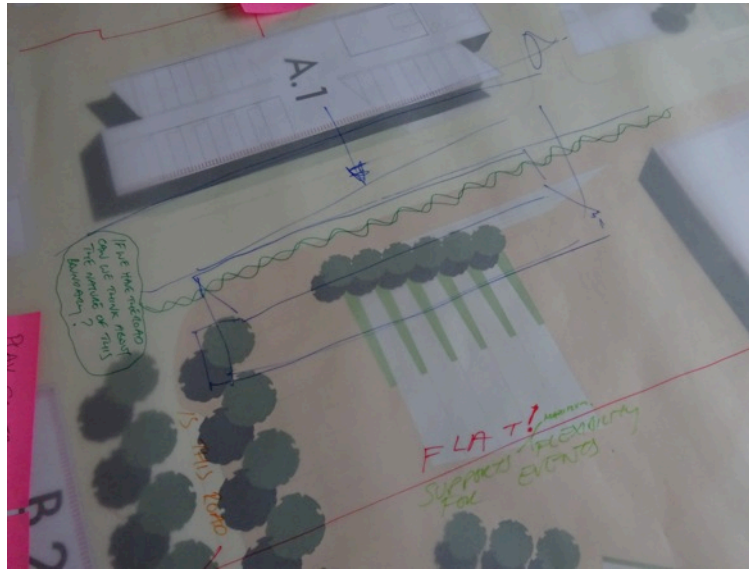


When thinking about what the University's new square could be, it is important to consider it in the context of the other squares and what they have to offer physically and socially. The Flag Market and the Covered Market are both on a slope with the proposed Bus Station square being flat. At the moment, the Flag Market has a range of seasonal activities, which are city-focused with the Covered Market being used occasionally for other events. Avenham Park also holds seasonal citywide events.

The meteorological conditions of the space should be considered when designing the square. The square faces south with the sun setting behind the new EIC building in the evening. The EIC building might affect the strong prevailing wind that comes off the Irish Seas from the west.

## The Square

The suggestions that people made included



### Physical Aspects

#### Flat or sloped

*A popular comment was that the square should be designed to be flexible and be an adaptable space, which is not overdesigned and enables different temporary structures to be installed when needed, rather than designed into the space as permanent features.*

*One issue, which recurred in many of the groups was the level of the square: whether to use the slight slope as a natural amphitheatre or to produce a flat square which is either built up at the southern end, or cut into the topography at the northern end.*

*Flat spaces are far easier to install temporary structures on, i.e. marquees, stages, markets etc., and though may incur additional costs in the construction will, in the long term, save money on management for the square.*

*Even flat squares have a camber which avoids any standing water in the square.*

#### Permanent and temporary structures

*'4th Plinth' for university public art projects.*

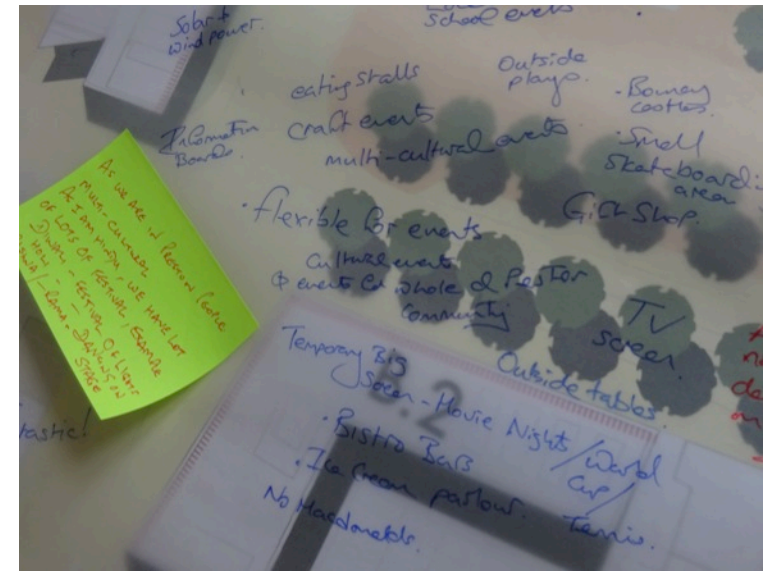
*A modern bandstand or area where small pop-up performances can happen.*

*There should be free seating (seating where you do not have to buy a drink).*



## The Square

The suggestions that people made included



*Somewhere to sit that is out of the wind.*

*Areas for more intimate performances, which do not need to be booked.*

### **Surface and materials**

*The materials used for the surface and the constructed need to be of a high quality to allow for HGVs moving across it, if required.*

*Green areas could have a particular attraction in the summer.*

*A space that can be easily navigated and doesn't put people off walking across it by misplaced barriers.*

### **Social Aspects**

*One of the questions that we posed was 'What would attract you to visit the new square?'*

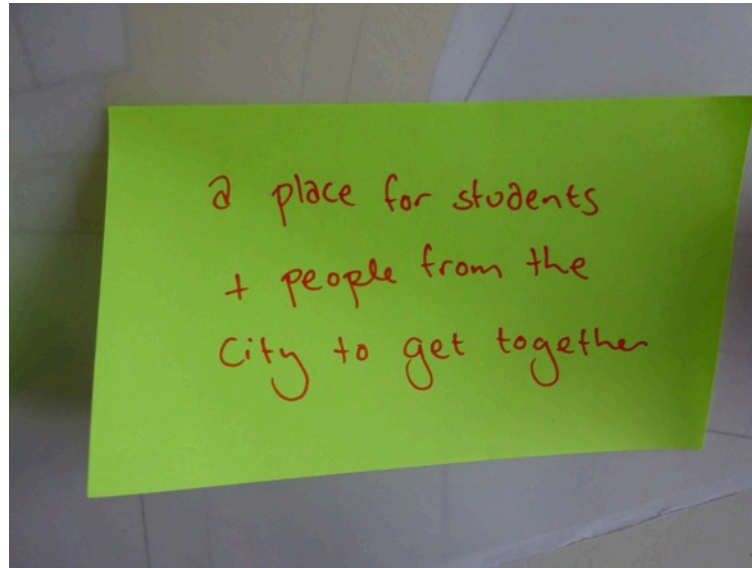
*The most common reply was that the square and the surrounding buildings should have a programme of events, which create opportunities for the University's staff, students and city neighbours, to have shared experiences.*

*It should be a place for testing new ideas - cultural, economic, and technical.*

*Seasonal markets aimed at the student budget.*

## The Square

The suggestions that people made included



*Live music events of different sizes.*

*Temporary outdoor film events.*

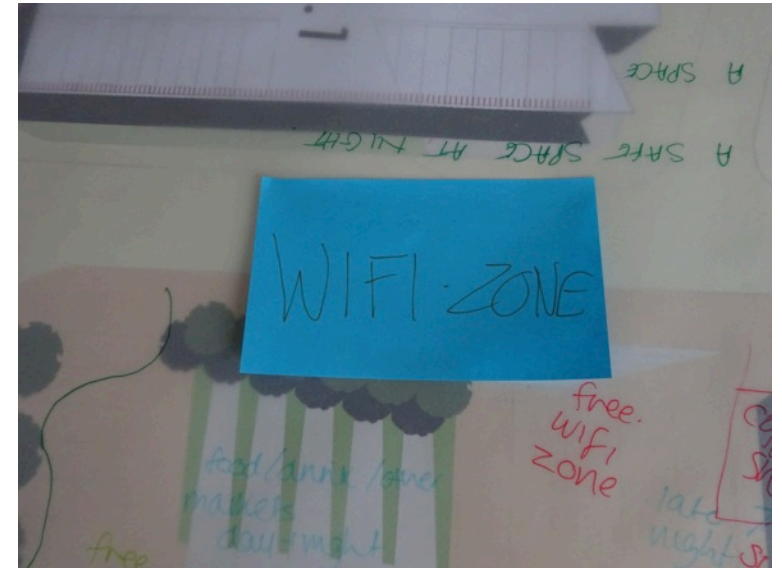
*Pop-up sporting activities, extreme sports.*

*Opportunities for students to perform and to organise events.*

*Space for big activities, such as Fresher's Week and the Lancashire Science Fair.*

*It could it be a place for graduation by using large marquees.*

*Pop-up events, food and non-alcoholic bars*



*A space for religious and cultural events to reflect the multicultural university and city.*

*It should be a space where people could meet socially and to work.*

*Free public Wi-Fi was something that came up in all the groups. It would be a big draw to people using the square as a social and work space. (At one point Preston had aspirations of offering free Wi-Fi in the city centre, perhaps this is a chance to take the lead.)*



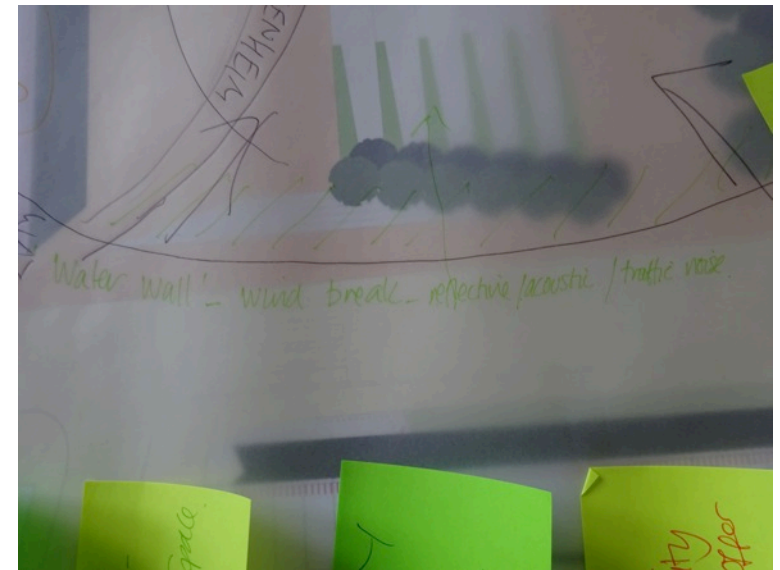
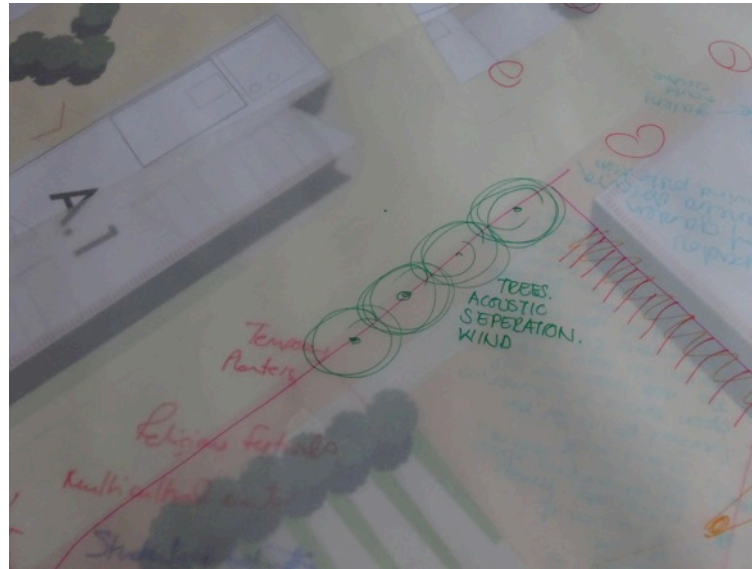


### 5.3 The Edges of the Square

The square will effectively be surrounded by three roads, which are proposed to be shared surface carriageways. In most cases, these will be populated by traffic moving slowly in both directions. The edges of the square will be a mixture of buildings butting up to the space and buildings separated by roads such as the new EIC building. There are other intercity squares in Britain and elsewhere that have successfully dealt with this design problem. They have all managed to knit the different elements together to realise a coherent and easily-read space.

## The Edges of the Square

The suggestions that people made included



### Physical Aspects

*There was a lot of discussion about where the edge of the square begins and ends. This was identified as an area that needs careful consideration.*

*Is the edge of the square where it meets the shared road surface, or could it be the other side of the shared surface?*

*Use of trees to form an edge to the square where they aren't any buildings.*

*Trees to act as a screen as well as an acoustic barrier.*

*Can the road at the southern end of the square be removed, allowing the square to only have roads down either side of it?*

### Social Aspects

*Create an edge, which is permeable as well as a safe.*

*To consider young families safety who will use the space socially and will attend events.*

*The shared surface will allow, with road closures, much larger events to take place.*

*An edge that dissuades vehicles coming onto the square, but allows free movement for pedestrians*





## 5.4 Animation of the Square

Contemporary squares across the world have often embraced elements that mechanically animate the space, be that water features or more recently LED screens and animated lighting of architectural features, and sometimes combinations of these elements. Water features bring sound as well as movement to a space, and more contemporary ones have an element

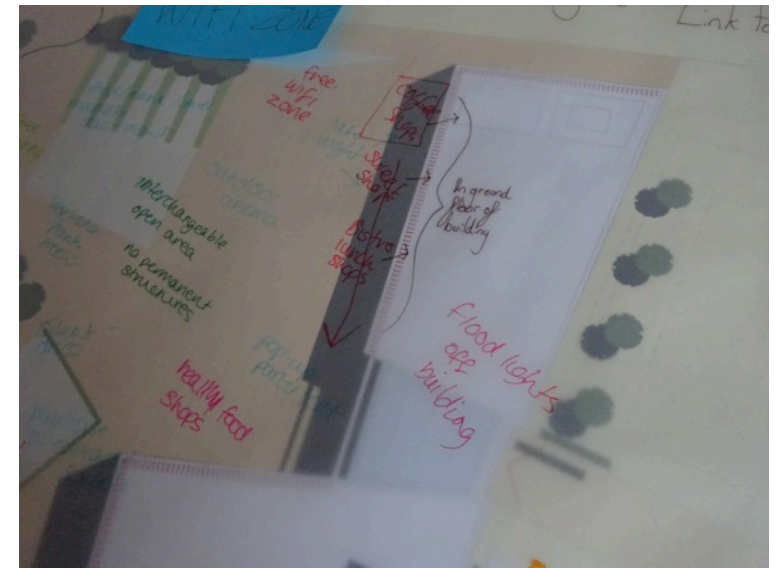
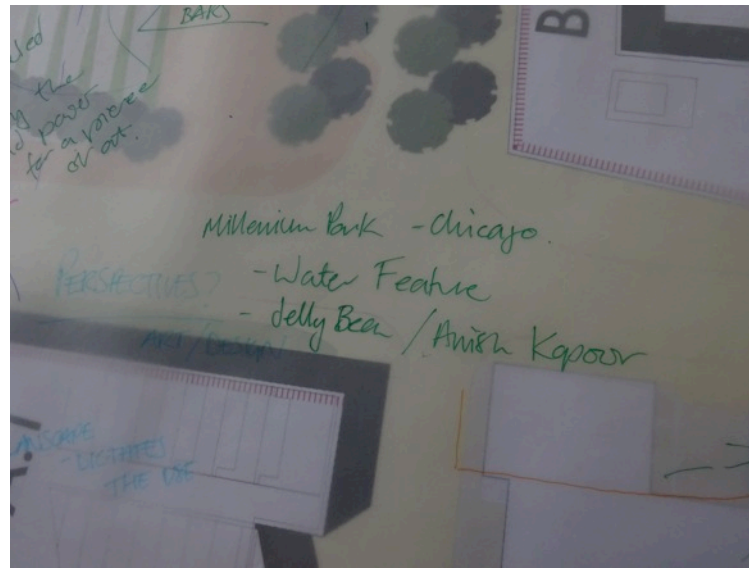
of audience interaction which is popular with young families. LED screens have been installed in many public squares and are very successful when engaging an audience for a large celebration, such as watching a sporting event which is taking place somewhere else. Animated lighting can create a sense of movement and drama particularly during the darker months of the year.

Many participants talked about LED screens, suggesting a range of places where these could go, particularly as temporary inventions into the square for particular events.

Lighting of the whole space, as well as potential animated lighting, has to be designed as a whole and not piecemeal. For such a large area, which also incorporates buildings as well as zones for pedestrian and traffic, it would be appropriate to create an integrated lighting strategy. In the long-term this would reduce the amount of lighting fittings needed and reduce the running costs, while producing a coherent space in the darker parts of the year.

## Animation of the Square

The suggestions that people made included



### Lighting

*Permanent lighting should be mounted on the buildings. This can make an area feel safe.*

*Large spaces can be lit cost-effectively by mounting the lights on buildings at high level.*

*Lit spaces at night can attract people to a space.*

*Festive lighting, which can be temporary and more intimate, in trees and lower level.*

*Spaces need to be lit to make them safe.*

*Lighting should be integrated into the design from an early stage and not as an after-thought.*

### Water Feature

*There was a wide suggestion of the type of water feature people would like to see in the space. Most of these are based on ones that they have seen elsewhere.*

*One type that was mentioned often was the grid of jets recessed into the paving, providing the potential for an interactive water feature. However, the area has to be flat for this type of installation - i.e. Granary Square Kings Cross London (the advantage is that it can be turned off to allow other events to take place).*

*Fountains that can provide a wall of water to perhaps act as an edge to a particular area of the square - i.e. Sheffield Railway Station*





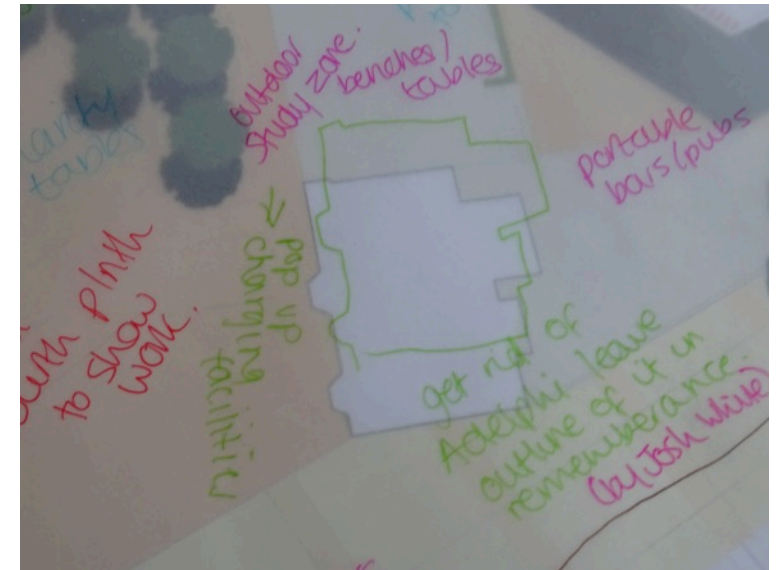
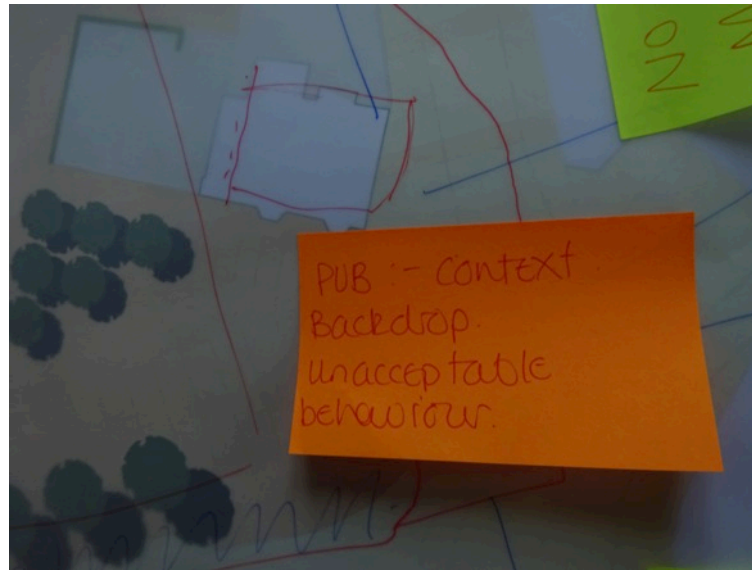
## 5.5 The Adelphi Pub

The Adelphi Pub - originally named the Adelphi Hotel - appears on maps of the area pre-1900, and records of its owners go back to the mid 1800s. Through it is not listed it will be one of the few remaining buildings from that time once the square is built. The building's position relates to a former road layout, which at the moment is reinforced by the frontage of the Fylde building, which will soon no longer be there. The pub is popular with students and is aimed at that audience, with a busy beer garden during term time.

The Adelphi became a discussion point in each group. People were divided on whether it should go or stay. The opinions did not breakdown into any particular age or social groups.

## The Adelphi Pub

The suggestions that people made included



### Physical Aspects

*The pub is in the wrong place to create a useful edge to the eastern side of the square.*

*It could prevent the new building forming an edge, which would be beneficial to creating the square.*

*If the pub is left in its present position, could the beer garden be repositioned so that it engages with the square more, perhaps with temporary barriers around it?*

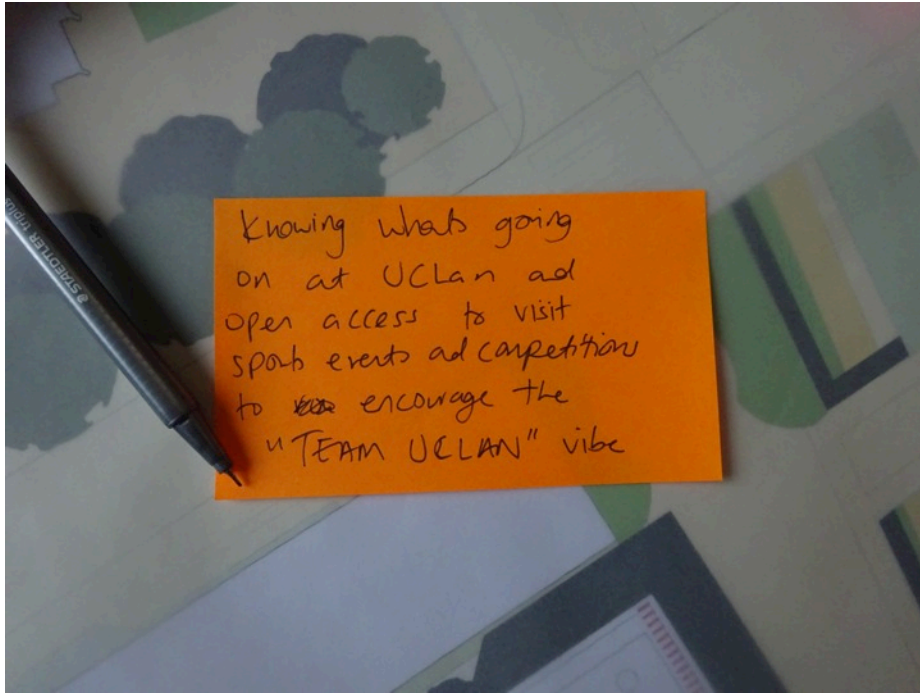
*If the building was removed, then a permanent outline of it could be made in the surface of the square as a reference to the past history of the area.*

### Social Aspects

*Does the square want to be dominated by a premises whose primary function is to sell alcohol?*

*There was a nostalgic regard for the pub with shared history.*

*It would provide a particular social space in the square and help activate it at night.*



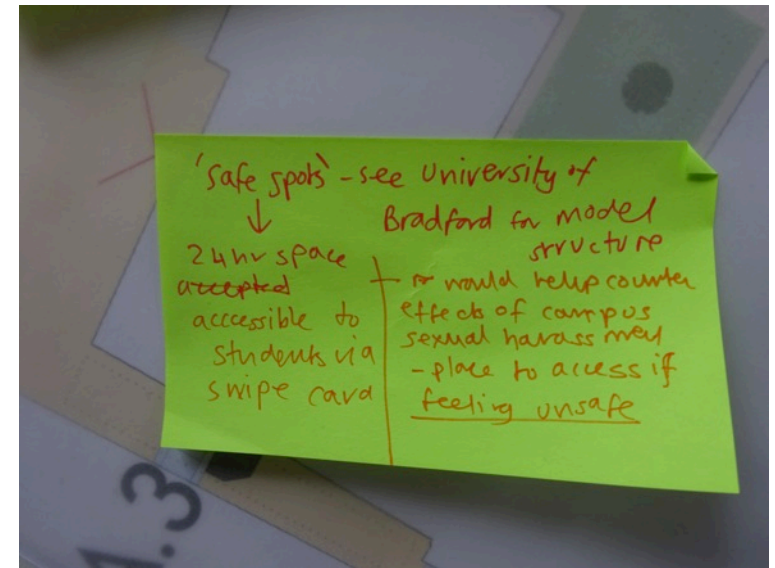
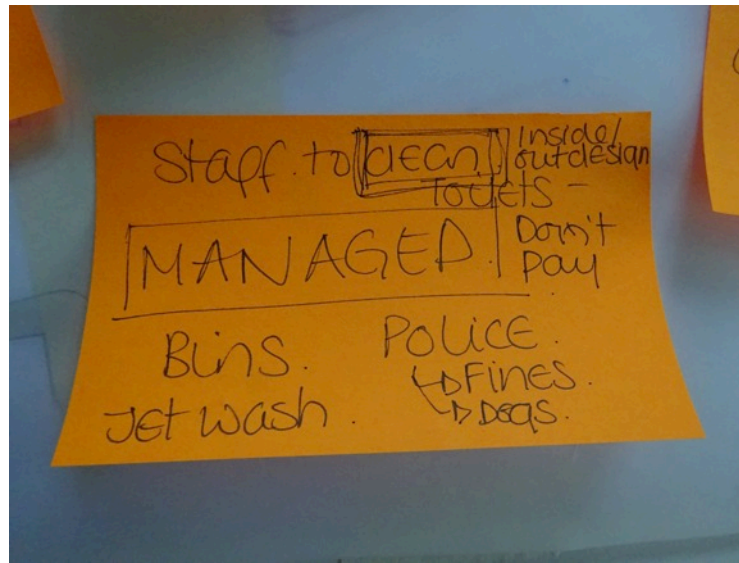
Knowing what's going  
on at UCLan and  
open access to visit  
sports events and competitions  
to ~~also~~ encourage the  
"TEAM UCLAN" vibe

## 5.6 Management of the Square

The management of the space needs to be carefully considered, and surprisingly this came up in all the workshops while addressing different aspects of the overall project. The square is going to be the University's 'front room' and showcase. It will need constant management and supervision. There needs to be a real sense of ownership of the space while not being too defensive or exclusive, if it is going to function successfully as a public space. The considered design of the space can mediate a lot of the management issues and make it a much more effective space to use.

## The Management of the Square

## The suggestions that people made included



### Physical Aspects

*The infrastructure required for managing the space should be built in as part of the design. This would include access to electric power and water for various parts of the square.*

*Creating a safe space by design.*

*Digital screens, which let the public know what's on in the university.*

*Design in measures that do not allow cars coming onto the square without permission, without using lots of bollards.*

### Social Aspects

*What management structure will there be in place for curating the space and events?*

*There needs to be an element of cooperation with other event providers in the city working through the Preston Cultural Framework Board.*

*A protocol for pop-up events.*

*It will require as much management as an outdoor room.*

*Feeling safe during or after an event.*

*Noise pollution for residential neighbours.*

*People will want to have a positive visit without spending money.*



## 6 Final Analysis

I have made a series of suggestions under the six core headings of the report. These can be used to instigate further discussions, as the brief for the project is developed, as well as indicating where further research and information is required.

### **The Surrounding Buildings**

Careful consideration needs to be given as to what takes place on the whole of the ground floor of the main buildings surrounding the square, as this will act as an attraction to visitors for 12 months of the year.

There is a real opportunity to create cultural spaces, which can showcase the best of UCLan, as well as creating a meeting space for the University and the City.

The University needs a significant flagship building to be the anchor for the square.

The design of the building needs to incorporate interior/exterior spaces that can attract people in all weathers.

### **The Square**

Consideration should be given to whether the square should be flat or sloped, in response to what activities the University plans to take place on it.

An events programme needs to be developed for the square, which can be realistically supported by the University, in terms of finance and University infrastructure.

The University should be mindful that this will be a very public space and that the institution will be judged constantly by the quality of its build, the management and programming.

### **The Edge of the Square**

The decision needs to be made early on in the design process about how the space will be used, as this will affect the robustness of any design solutions concerned with the edges.

## Final Analysis

### Animation in the Square

Making sure that lighting is integrated into the design from an early stage will produce a more coherent solution.

Largescale LED screens should be hired for particular events rather than investing in one that will very quickly become obsolete. This also allows them to be installed in different places.

Water features are a real asset to a square if built into the design, but they need to be of quality and will require constant maintenance and servicing.

It is suggested that research visits are carried out to speak to other large institutions and city councils that have successfully managed water features over an extended period - i.e. Sheffield City Council.

### The Adelphi Pub

The University needs to consider whether it wants a pub as a key place maker on the new square?

Whether the pub goes or stays should also be discussed with the scheme architects as it will have a large impact on the finished design of the square and how it functions.

### The Management of the Square

A clear management plan, which examines the resource implications for the long term.

Involving the management expertise in the University in the design process will enable potential issues to be resolved from the beginning.

There will be significant long-term costs with installations such as water features and lighting, which will need regular and careful maintenance and servicing if they are to remain working. Therefore, it is essential to build those costs into any management plan. These installations will have a finite life and will then have to be replaced.

## 7. Appendix

The following five sheets map the collection of comments from the five individual workshops. They were constructed by three of the facilitators looking at all the plans for each workshop and condensing the significant comments onto one single sheet.

The workshops also discussed what could happen during the different seasons of the year and what the squares appearance might be. This is represented on the sheets by using different coloured text for each season.

Winter – Blue

Autumn – Green

Summer – Red

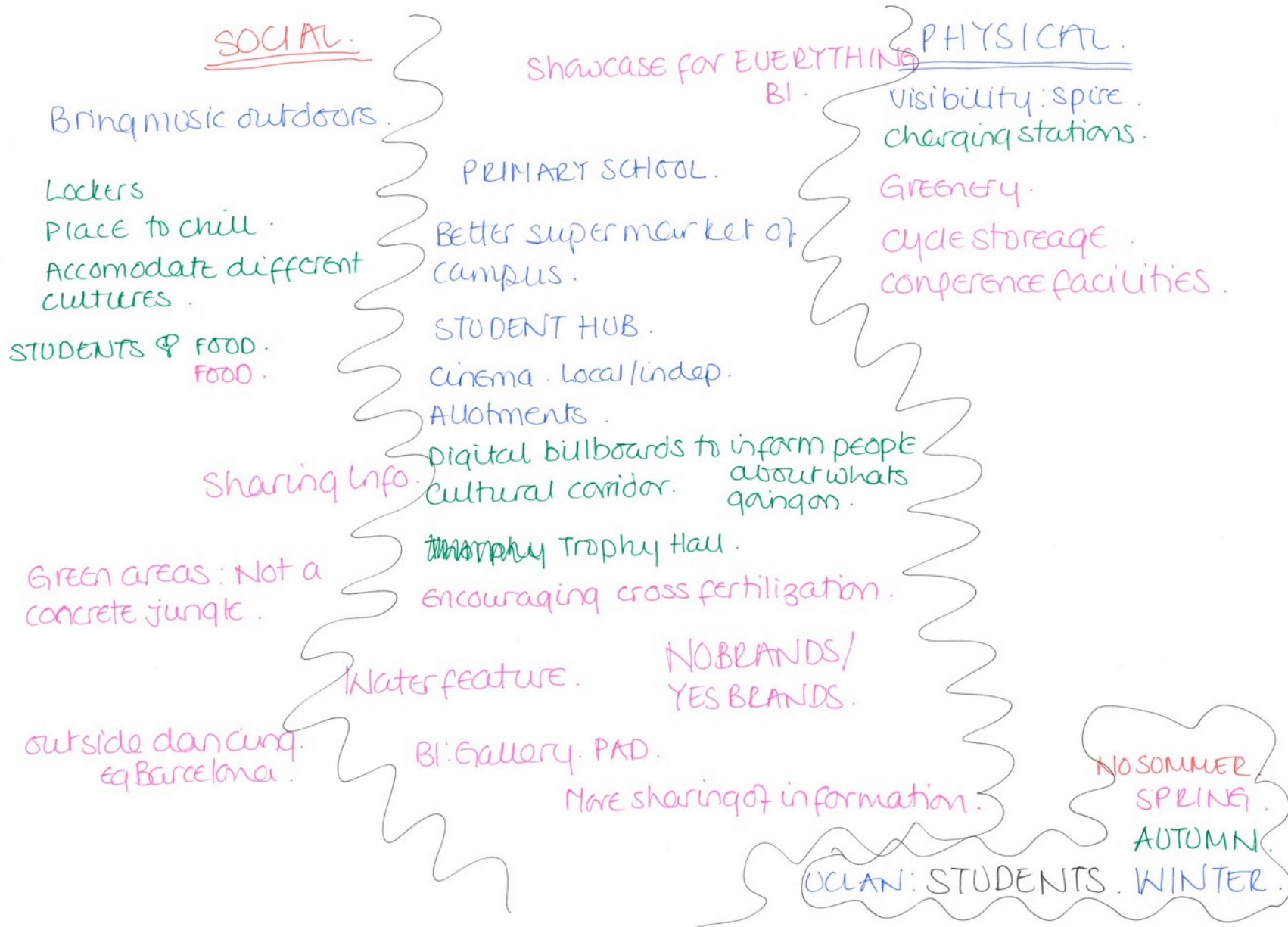
Spring – Orange



# UCLan Staff Workshop



# UCLan Students Workshop



# Cultural Sector Preston

## SOCIAL

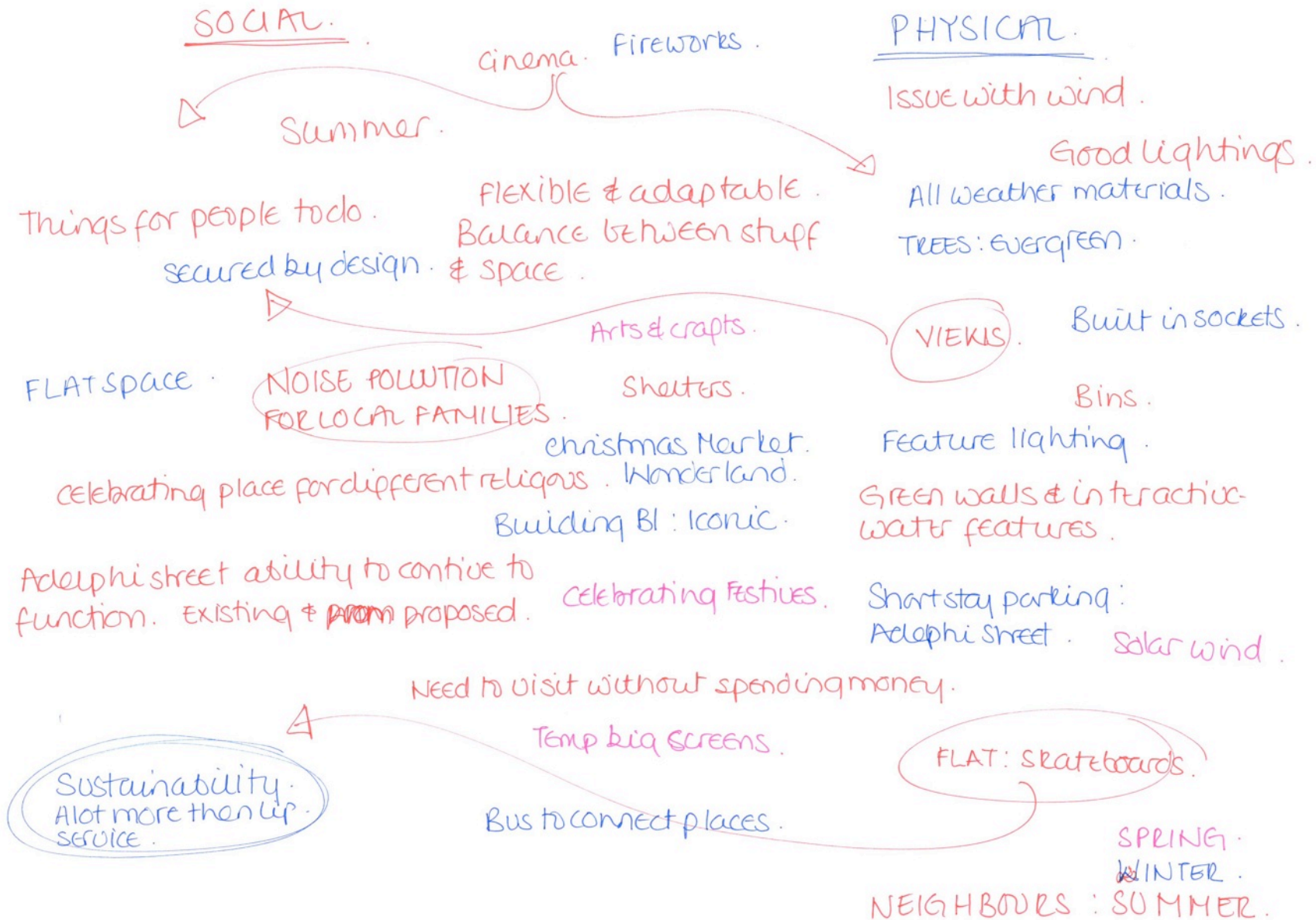
Good routes across.  
Cinema.  
Community garden centre.  
Attractive facades.  
Wharfs on interactive map.  
Flexible space.  
Mixed use.  
Magnet to come.  
Inspirational space.  
BI: Interplay without door events.  
Gallery.  
Feeling safe: during & after an event.  
Visual link.  
International / Food drink.  
Allowing for change.  
Underground Buildings.  
Audience development.  
Not to become overpowering.  
Amphitheatre.  
Family friendly.  
Fashion show: Graduates.  
Animated space: change. Adaptable.  
Get rid of Pub.  
Maypole. ~~CONCERT~~ CONCERTS.: Temp road closures.  
SOUND, CAPACITY.  
LEVEL. INFRASTRUCTURE

## PHYSICAL

Big clock - control.  
Urban climbing wall.  
Wifi.  
Lighting! Lighting again.  
Modern bandstand.  
Speakers corner.  
Roof terrace.  
Keep / rework terrace houses.  
Sculpture gardens.  
Permeable Architecture.  
Grassy humps & mounds to situation.  
Wall to wall wind break.  
Water for / as an acoustic barrier.  
Trees need to be managed.  
SPRING.  
SUMMER  
CULTURAL AUTUMN.



# Campus Neighbours



# Hutton Grammar School

## 6<sup>th</sup> form Students



## 8. Conclusion

The engagement workshops have demonstrated a sincere desire by many participants to have an active say in what square they would like, and what they would like to see happening on it. There was a high level of engagement based on the different groups' expertise and experience. The workshops generated hundreds of observations, creative ideas, and interactions with the proposed premise of a new square for the University.

Obviously not everyone's opinions can be accommodated in one coherent design. However, the information collected has been carefully distilled to form a manageable menu of options. These can then be used by the University to decide what square and entrance it wants, which in turn can inform a brief for design professionals.





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