

# Kings Heath Village Square Review

June 2013



(Photography by Oz)

Undertaken by:



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## **Acknowledgements**

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We would specifically like to thank Phillip Osman and Kerri Murray, Marilyn Hull and Brian Miles for their help and support throughout the review.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In November 2012 Community Pathways was commissioned by the All Saints Community Development Company to review the Kings Heath Village Square development. The purpose of the review was to evaluate:

- The way the Village Square Project was undertaken
- The use of the Village Square and how it meets the aspirations of local people and organisations and delivers the benefits and outcomes set out in the Changing Spaces, Community Spaces application
- New opportunities for the use of the Village Square by beneficiary groups, particularly those with high levels of need

This is a summary of the Final Report from the review and includes the key findings from 305 interviews.

### **Background to the Kings Heath Village Square Project**

The site of the Kings Heath Village Square was originally the disused churchyard of All Saints Church. The churchyard was surrounded by a wall and had overgrown trees throughout. On the corner of the churchyard was a toilet block. A person who was interviewed as part of this review stated " I never went in, it was dark, miserable and wasn't safe"

The congregation of All Saints Church decided to work in partnership with other organisations, such as Birmingham City Council, Groundwork Trust, the local traders association and local communities to transform the churchyard into an open, fully accessible Village Square. The All Saints Community Arts Group led on the design of the project and involved local communities in the development of features such as the Labyrinth.

Funding was secured from the Big Lottery's Community Spaces Fund and Birmingham City Council. An extensive public consultation ensured that local people, organisations and businesses also had their say in the design, features and materials for the Village Square. Once the consultation was completed the construction of the Village Square began.

### **How well was the Kings Heath Village Square Project implemented?**

Interviews were undertaken with 5 members of the original Project Steering Group who were responsible for overseeing the development and construction of the Village Square.

The way the project was undertaken and its implementation was seen as being a success by all the Steering Group members. The time and effort that was put into designing the Village Square, having the right mix of skills on the Steering Group and developing strong partnerships with communities and organisations were all cited as reasons for the success of the project.

### **What are the key lessons from the implementation of the Village Square Project?**

- An urban space project needs to be well thought through, well developed and deliverable before funding is sought.
- The support of the local authority and local councillors is essential for the success of a urban space project.
- A dedicated, professional project manager is essential for these types of major construction projects.
- Have the right people with the right skills on the Project Steering group
- Spend time and effort to find the right landscape architect who understands the vision and the project.
- Having a consultation that really engages local communities, schools and other project stakeholders is essential to the success of this type of project.
- There should be clear lines of responsibility between the contractors and a project Steering Group.
- It is important to separate governance and delivery.
- Follow the procedures that are applied in the real world. Get professionals to negotiate penalties for late delivery. Ensure that contractors have a financial penalty if they are the cause of a delay.

### **Key Findings**

Local people, businesses and stakeholders agreed to participate in the survey or attend a focus group. We would like to thank everyone for giving up their time to help us complete the review. The main findings from the survey are listed below:

- 96.5% of respondents indicated that they thought the Village Square offered a better environment for the people and organisations in Kings Heath.
- 88% of respondents indicated that having access to the Village Square benefited them, Many of the respondents felt that the Village Square had given Kings Heath a 'heart' with respondents commenting "I just love it!. It's the village focal point we never had" and "A great public amenity creating a heart in the village. Gives a focal point to Kings Heath".
- 84% of participants felt that the Village Square is a safe environment and this view is supported by local police who believe there has been a 60% reduction in crime figures in the Village Square area since it was completed.
- 44% of respondents go to the Village Square to use the seating areas, 40% to visit the cafe and 34% use it as a place to meet family and friends.
- Respondents cited the Labyrinth and the War Memorial as the least popular reasons for visiting the Village Square with only 10% of respondents indicating that these were the reason for their visit. Many respondents indicated that they were unaware that there was a Labyrinth.
- 95% of stakeholders who were interviewed felt the Village Square has encouraged more people to be involved in volunteering.

- 52% of businesses indicated that new visitors were attracted to Kings Heath as a result of the Village Square, 48% of businesses either indicated that they did not know if new visitors had been attracted to Kings Heath or believed that the Village Square had not attracted new visitors.

Below are some of the comments about the Village Square from people who took part in the survey:

*"A restful place, a meeting place. A fantastic space to sit, have coffee and contemplate."*

*"It provides a beautiful space at the centre of Kings Heath. "*

*"I like the atmosphere particularly in the summer. People are friendly outside. I sit down and talk to strangers. The best thing that has happened to Kings Heath."*

*"I just love it! It's the village focal point that we never had."*

*"Kings Heath now has a community spirit because of the Square."*

*"Opened Kings Heath up and give Kings Heath a 'focus' a 'heart'."*

## **Recommendations**

**Based on the overall findings of the review , nine key recommendations are made:**

- 1) Recruit a Village Square Activities Facilitator who can organise a range of events and activities based on the suggestions from the Review. Some of these events can be income generating.
- 2) Develop a Marketing Strategy to ensure that the Village Square is effectively promoted to local businesses, organisations and communities with a focus on ensuring that groups that support people with additional needs are aware of forthcoming events and activities. One suggestion was to email a List of Events, on a monthly basis, to local organisations and community groups so that it can be displayed on their Notice Boards.
- 3) Create an Interpretation board for the Labyrinth so that people know what is it and how to use it
- 4) Raise awareness of the Notice Board in the middle of the Square through bigger signage. Many respondents did not know there was a Notice Board but indicated they would use it now they knew it was there.
- 5) Work with community transport and volunteers to provide transport to events in the Village Square for people who are less mobile.
- 6) Develop a Business Development Strategy for working with local organisations who support people with high level of need to offer them the opportunity for promotional days

e.g. Mental Health and to identify other ways that organisations can benefit from having access to the Village Square.

7) Develop a Business Development Strategy to work with local businesses, particularly the independent businesses, on identifying ways they could use the Village Square. None of the businesses located on the High Street or surrounding areas who participated in the research were using the Square and this is an area that could benefit shops on the High Street and also provide an income stream for the Square.

8) Use the Square for a mid week market such as an antique market or other specialist market.

9) Invite groups (local and national) to attend monthly open days (10 per year) to describe how the All Saints Community Development Company turned the aspiration of developing a Village Square into a reality.

## **Conclusion**

The Kings Heath Village Square Project development, implementation and consultation process during the design and construction stage of the Village Square were considered to be successful. There were several factors identified that contributed to the success of the Village Square development stage, such as the strong partnership approach adopted by the original Steering Group and the time and effort that went into planning the project before applying for funding.

The evidence suggests that Village Square has met the aspirations of local people and organisations. It has become a meeting place, a place to sit and contemplate and somewhere to stage events and activities. Some respondents stated that the Village Square was the 'heart' of Kings Heath and gave it a 'focal' that the Village did not have before.

It was felt that the marketing of events needs to improve and a process needs to be developed that ensures local people, especially those with high levels of need, are informed about future events.

All respondents were asked what events or activities they would like to see in the Village Square and there was a very enthusiastic response. The majority of respondents indicated that they would like to see arts / performance arts activities such as plays, live music and other live performances.

The responses from the 305 people interviewed or who attended a focus group suggest that the Village Square is a success and that it has become a focal point that brings together people from all over Kings Heath.



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to review the Village Square project, to examine the project implementation and to identify opportunities for improvement and further development.

### **1.1 Review Aims and Objective**

The Review had three overall key aims:

To collect evidence about:

- The way the Village Square Project was undertaken.
- The use of the Village Square and how it meets the aspirations of local people and organisations and delivers the benefits and outcomes set out in the Stage 2 Changing Spaces, Community Spaces application.
- New opportunities for the use of the Village Square by beneficiary groups, particularly those with high levels of need.

The purpose of the review is to consider the lessons that can be learned from Village Square Project and to make recommendations based on the evidence collected.

### **1.2 Changing Spaces, Community Spaces Aims and Outcomes**

The Flagship Big Lottery Fund has four overall key outcomes:

- Better local environment.
  - An increase in the total area of well-designed and well-managed public space
- Increase in access to quality local spaces.
  - Increase in social capital and community cohesion, with more people of different ages, beliefs, races and interests having the opportunity to interact in shared spaces.
- Improvement in partnership between support organisations, communities and authorities.
  - Shared learning through dissemination of good practice
- Increase in people actively involved in a practical environmental project.
  - Higher levels of participation and volunteering in community projects.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

It was agreed at the Project Initiation Meeting that a mixture of focus groups and interviews would be undertaken to ensure that views were collected from a range of individual and beneficiary groups including those with high levels of need. In total 305 interviews / focus group participants were included in the research. The survey was undertaken in and around the Village Square, including during the Farmers Market and the Craft Fair throughout February and March 2013. During inclement weather interviews were also undertaken in the All Saints Centre cafe. In addition in-depth interviews were undertaken with five members of the original Village Square Steering Group who managed the Village Square development and building process.

### 2.2 Survey Design

The research questions for the survey were informed by a focus group with stakeholders, All Saints Project Workers and community researchers. The survey included multiple-choice questions but also provided open-ended responses for additional comments. Three surveys were designed to cover local businesses, stakeholders and members of the public, although a core group of questions were included in all of the surveys (Appendix 1).

### 2.3 Research Sample

One of the review objectives was to ensure that views were sought from people with high levels of need. Focus groups were held with service users from KINMOS Volunteer Group Ltd who support people with mental health issues, Robins Court, which provides housing for older people and the Inclusion Youth Group based at All Saints Centre, Kings Heath.

The business respondents comprised of businesses located on the High Street and surrounding streets and stallholders who attended the Farmers Market and Craft Fair.

The table below indicates the number of interviews undertaken and the type of respondent:

**Figure 1 Composition of Research Sample**

Valid	Business	39	14.0
	Member of the Public	224	80.6
	Stakeholder	15	5.4
	Focus Group participants	23	N/A
	Members of the Steering Group	4	N/A
	Total	305	100.0

The statistical analysis that follows is based on a sample of 278 people. The responses from the focus groups and interviews with the Steering Group will be presented as qualitative analysis in the form of narrative and comments.

## **2.4 Demographics**

The overall population of the Moseley and Kings Heath ward is 25,669 (ONS Census 2011). The majority of people in the ward are of white ethnicity (61.4%), mixed ethnic groups account for 5.2%, Asian / Asian British account for 25.3% of the population, Black/Black British 5.6% and other ethnic groups 2.5% of the population. Woman account for 48.8% of the population and men for 51.2% ([http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/quick\\_statistics](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/quick_statistics)).

The criteria given to the researchers was to gain approximately half the sample from women and half from men and to ensure that different ethnic groups and age ranges were included in the research to align as best as possible with the census demographics.

## **2.5 Ethical Considerations**

No personal information such as name and full address was collected. The gender, ethnicity and age of each respondent was recorded to ensure that the sample was generally representative of the total populations of Kings Heath and Moseley.

All surveys undertaken will be shredded one month after the final report has been submitted, which is in line with Community Pathways CIC Confidentiality Policy.

### **3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The reviews main findings are outlined in the following sections:

#### **3.1 Demographics.**

#### **3.2. Results of the Village Square Development Steering Group Interviews**

#### **3.3. Number of visits and reasons for visiting Kings Heath Village Square.**

#### **3.4. Kings Heath Village Square offers a Better Local Environment.**

#### **3.5 . Benefits / Outcomes of the Village Square:**

- The Public
- Stakeholders
- Businesses

#### **3.6. Additional comments from Stakeholders and Businesses.**

#### **3.7. Suggestions for future use .**

#### **3.8. Results of the Focus Groups.**

All results are presented as a percentage of the sample and the number of responses in ( ) and unless otherwise stated are calculated from the total number of responses received to each question.

### 3.1 Demographics

#### Gender of Respondents

Figure 2 indicates the achieved sample for gender was fairly close to the desired profile of 48.8% female and 51.2% male although slightly more females, 52.2% and fewer males, 47.8% participated in the survey than the area profile.

**Figure 2 Gender of Respondents**

	Frequency	Percent
Female	145	52.2
Male	133	47.8
Total	278	100.0

#### Age of Respondents

The researchers were asked to interview a representative sample across the age ranges to ensure that views were heard from all age groups. Figure 3 overleaf indicates that is fairly even across the range with a smaller sample of people aged 16 years and under (4.7%). All young people aged 16 or below were interviewed in the presence of their parents or a youth worker.

**Figure 3 Age of Respondents**

	Frequency	Percent
<16	13	4.7
25 - 34 years	39	14.0
35 - 44 years	48	17.3
45 - 54 years	38	13.7
55 - 64 years	46	16.5
65 + years	47	16.9
Prefer not to say	9	3.2
Total	278	100.0

### Ethnicity of Respondents

The ethnicity profile of the respondents is Asian / Asian British 15.1% (42), Black / Black British 4.3% (12), Chinese / Mixed Ethnic groups 2.9% (8) and White 73.7% (205) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4 Ethnicity of Respondents**

	Frequency	Percent
Asian or Asian British	42	15.1
Black or Black British	12	4.3
Chinese	2	.7
Mixed	6	2.2
Prefer not to answer	10	3.6
Other	1	.4
White	205	73.7
Total	278	100.0

### Respondents who disclosed a disability / long term medical condition

Figure 5 below shows that 19.8% of all respondents declared a disability or long standing medical condition.

**Figure 5 Number of Respondents with a disability or long standing medical condition**

	Frequency	Percent
No	212	76.3
Prefer not to say	9	3.2
Yes	55	19.8
Total	276	99.3
No Response	2	.7
Total	278	100.0

### 3.2. Results of the Village Square Development Steering Group Interviews

Interviews were undertaken with 5 people who were on the All Saints Community Development Company (ASCDC) Steering Group when the Village Square project was being

planned and the construction began. These interviews were undertaken to review the way the Village Square Project was undertaken and implemented. The results of the interviews are detailed below.

### **The History of Kings Heath Village Square**

The Kings Heath Village Square Project has a long history. The development of the site, including the All Saints Centre, was strongly influenced by the All Saints Church Mission Statement and Vision which was focused on serving the community and working with children, young people, older people and families across all communities.

Consultation began in 1996/7 with the initial planning stage entitled 'The Way Forward'. Birmingham City Council (BCC) were first consulted in 2001 when planning approval for the site was sought and during this period they gave the Steering Group informed advice about the application.

The original plan for the Village Square was on a smaller scale than the one that was approved because BCC were keen that the Church could be clearly seen from Vicarage Road, which was not an option with the original plans. This, together with the preservation of the trees on the site, significantly influenced the overall layout of the whole site.

The revised planning application covered the All Saints Centre and the Village Square and was included in the Kings Heath Action Plan. Kings Heath Centre Partnership agreed a funding package to enable the detailed design and planning of the All Saints Centre and the Village Square to be undertaken. BCC agreed to give the corner of the proposed Square (where the toilets were situated which was Highways Land), over to the Church. Planning approval for the site, which included an outline design for the Village Square, was granted in 2006.

Funding for the development was then successfully undertaken by All Saints Community Development Company (ASCDC) who raised financial support from BCC (£203k) and the Big Lottery Community Spaces Fund (£429k).

### **Who were the Key Partners in the Project?**

The Village Square Project Steering Group included people from BCC, representatives from the Big Lottery/Groundwork, the Diocese and the local community; the Project Landscape Architect and Quantity Surveyor; and representatives from ASCA and ASCDC. The Steering Group met on a monthly basis throughout the design and construction period.

All the people interviewed felt that the right skills, knowledge and interests were represented on the Steering Group, with one respondent stating "the Steering Group consisted of some highly skilled individuals." Another respondent stated that "the technical issues were overcome because of having the right partners involved, including local councillors and BBC officers."

## **What Processes were used to define the Kings Heath Village Square design?**

The Church arts group (All Saints Community Arts) oversaw the original detailed design of the Village Square and there was a strong arts focus in the development of the layout and features. The water feature, for example, was designed at an Artists Weekend event after one of the Steering Group members saw a soft, flowing water feature. The Labyrinth was designed with the Youth Project, local schools, The Arts Council, the Church Sunday School and a local Caribbean group. A Mood Board was also used to inform the architects brief.

## **The Village Square Consultation**

The Steering Group commissioned further consultation to ensure that local communities and key groups were engaged in the project and could contribute to the design elements of the Village Square. The consultation sought the views of local people, organisations already on site in the centre, local schools and community groups. The consultation included obtaining views on the features of the Village Square people most liked/disliked, what seating and planting they would like to see and what materials they would like to be used in the design.

The Steering Group representatives felt that the consultation process was successful with one respondent stating "There is evidence of a good consultation process. It was essential to build trust with the local community."

Another respondent felt that although the consultation process was successful, the responses to people who had requested regular email updates as part of the consultation was less successful. The respondent stated "100s of people returned the questionnaire asking for regular email updates and because a contact database was not created these updates may not have been sent."

## **Communication**

There is evidence that the Village Square project was well publicised during the planning and construction stages. Each edition of the All Saints Community Development Company newsletter, 'Outlook' and the All Saints Church newsletter contained an update on progress. A number of information evenings were also held and there was an interactive website where people could look at the progress of the Village Square development.

Communication with the Steering Group and key partners was also cited as being very good. One respondent stated "Communication during the project was good with people kept up-to-date with changes, problems and solutions".

## **Major Challenges**

There were a number of planning, technical and construction challenges identified by the respondents. These included:



## **1) Project Management**

The paid Project Manager left before construction began and this meant that a member of the All Saints Community Development Company became a volunteer Project Manager. One respondent stated "The handover was seamless and the volunteer was capable of taking on that role. However, there were capacity issues because the project management was being done by volunteers".

## **2) 'Stopping Up Orders'**

Extending the Village Square design to incorporate Highways land meant that the public toilets had to be relocated and there was also an issue around the control box for the traffic lights and the location of and access to the gas mains. The Diocese representative was responsible for this element of the project and stated "I had a steep learning curve however I had the BCC process to follow and I also had some technical advice from BCC officers". The Diocese representative was also involved in very complex and time consuming negotiations with the Utility company about the need to ensure that after any repairs the Village Square would be restored to its original design. These negotiations were successfully concluded and the incorporation of the corner plot into the Village Square was seen as a major success.

## **3) Relocation of Gravestones**

The initial site clearance indicated that there were more headstones in the Churchyard than were originally expected and these had not been incorporated into the design. Various plans were submitted to BCC to accommodate the additional headstones, however, it took time for the BCC Conservation Officer and Archaeologist to agree to a solution.

One respondent stated "I found the lack of solutions from some BCC officers to be challenging. There did not seem to be the will to find creative ways around problems."

## **4) Slippage on contractors timescales for project completion**

Some of the respondents commented on the problem of communication between project staff, contractors and the sub-contractors regarding the labyrinth, specifically the ordering and delivery of the specialist stone used in the construction. Other delays in the construction meant that rather than opening the Village Square in July 2011 it did not open until October 2011 with full completion in December 2011.

The Steering Group followed BCCs robust tendering process to appoint the construction company. However, one respondent indicated that the company appointed may not have been the right company "because they are not experts in this type of landscaping".

## **Major Successes**

The major successes of the project are as follows:

1) BCC giving the Highways Land to the Village Square project. This allowed the Square to be completely opened up rather than having the toilet block shutting off access.

2) Having funding from both Big Lottery and BCC meant that high quality building materials were used throughout the construction and these have worked really well. One respondent stated "High quality materials were used that are durable and that will leave a lasting legacy."

3) The partnership approach adopted by the group also led to the project success. A respondent commented "Faith groups, the Church, councillors, Birmingham City Council and other stakeholders were all involved in the planning and design of the Square. This inclusive approach led to a sustainable legacy consisting of a really high quality open space".

Some of the comments from the Steering Group Members are listed below:

*"Bold, fundamental decisions were taken during the design and construction stage such as no barriers and the pruning of the trees (a massive improvement) and this had led to a viable, well used space that is used by the majority of the population."*

*"The finished product is visually fantastic. The Village Square is a brilliant example of collaboration between the voluntary, public (BCC) and private sector."*

*"We have ended up with something to be very proud of. The project has engaged and involved people who are not involved in the church - which was one of the original intentions."*

## **Lessons Learned**

Each of the respondents were asked what they believed were the key learning points from the project. These are listed below:

### **Planning and Funding**

1) A project needs to be well thought through, well developed and deliverable before funding is sought. It is essential that the funding fits the well developed project (as happened with the Village Square project) rather making the project fit the funding. So plan the project, keep it updated and then look for appropriate funding.

2) The Big Lottery could consider simplifying the funding requirements on these types of major construction projects; some of the requirements were extremely specific and stringent and contributed to a delay in completion.

3) The support of the local authority and local councillors is essential for the success of a urban space project.

4) A dedicated, professional project manager is essential for these types of major construction projects.

- 5) Have the right people with the right skills on the Project Steering group.
- 6) Spend time and effort to find the right landscape architect who understands the vision and the project.
- 7) Having a consultation process that really engages local communities, schools and other project stakeholders is essential to the success of this type of project.

### **Contractors**

- 8) There should be clear lines of responsibility between the contractors and a project steering group.
- 9) It is important to separate governance and delivery.
- 10) Follow the procedures that are applied in the real world. Ensure that professionals are available to negotiate penalties for late delivery. Ensure that contractors have a financial penalty if they are the cause of a delay. This will have to be balanced against the increase in contract cost.

### **Other**

- 11) Ensure that databases are created and maintained so that if local people request updates they can be sent in a timely manner.

### **Conclusion**

The evidence suggests that the implementation of the Village Square Project was a success. This was due, in part, to the time and effort that went into the detailed planning of the project and then identifying suitable funding and submitting a good bid. One member of the Steering Group stated "I wish to compliment those individuals who had the original vision 10 years ago and had the tenacity to see a complicated and ambitious project through to completion - not many churches could carry out such a project".

The consultation process involving members of the public, local organisations and businesses and other stakeholders such as schools was also deemed to be a success. Local people felt involved in the design of the Village Square and therefore felt some ownership for it.

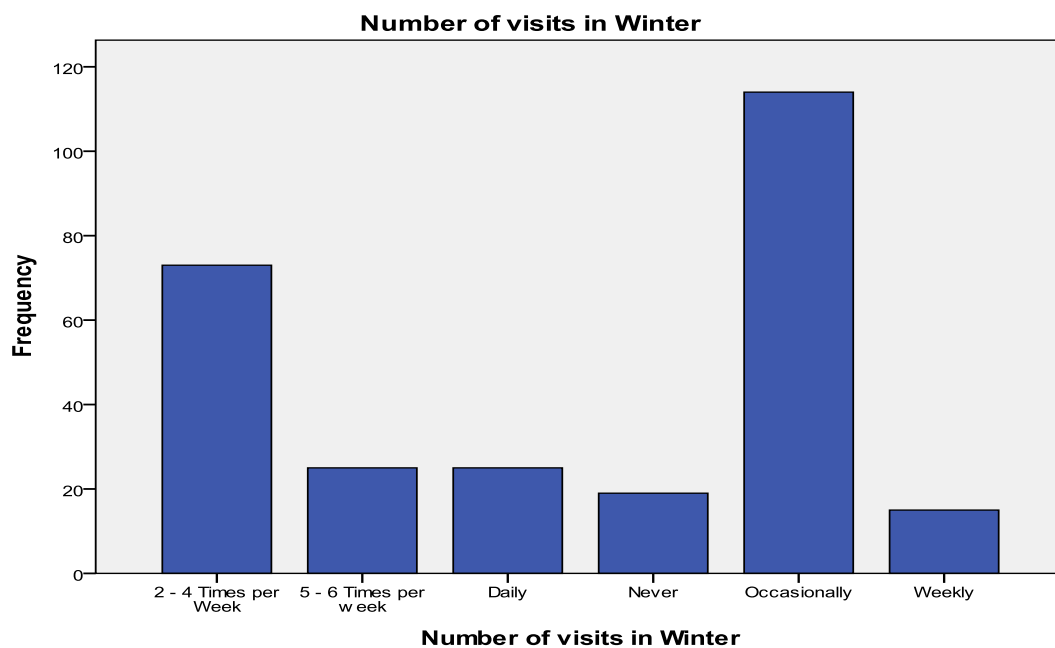
## **3.3 Number of visits and reasons for visiting Kings Heath Village Square**

### **Number of visits**

The respondents were asked how often they visited the Village Square and the reasons for the visits. Because the research was undertaken during February and March 2013 participants were asked how often they visited the Square in the winter and summer

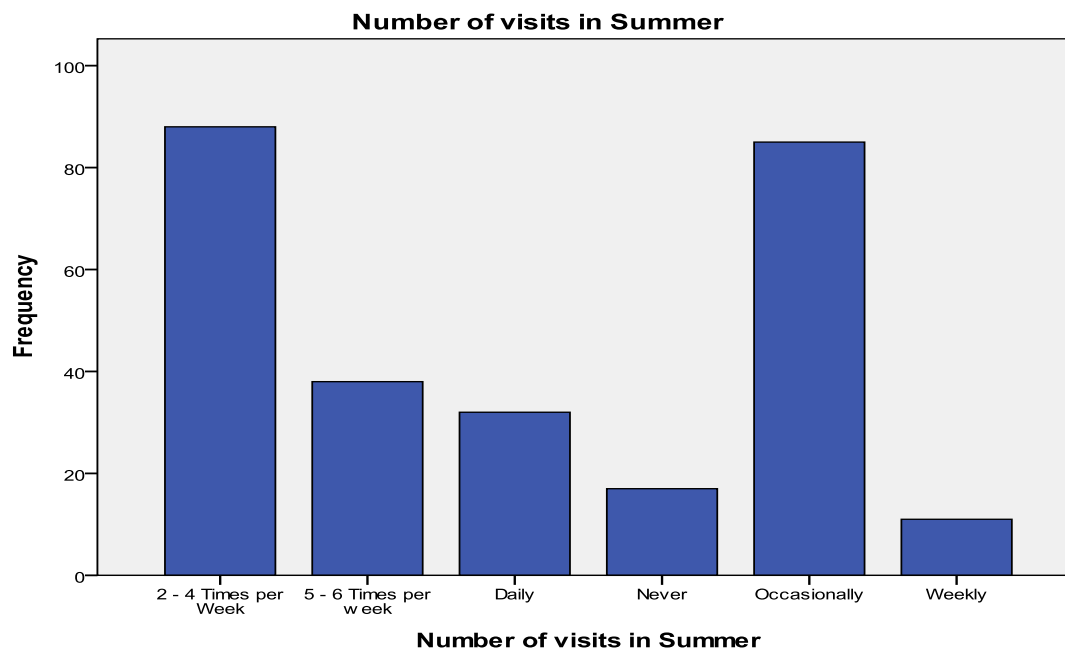
months. The results indicate that the Village Square is still used during the winter months with 42% (114) of respondents indicating they visited occasionally compared to 31 % (85) in the summer and an increase in the number of people who visit 2 - 4 times per week from 27% (73) in the winter months to 32.5% (88) in the summer months. The percentage of people who never visit the Village Square in the winter was 7% (19) with 6% (17) of respondents indicating that they never visited the Village Square in the summer. Figures 6 and 7 below illustrate the range of responses.

**Figure 6 Number of visits to the Village Square (Winter)**



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**Figure 7 Number of Visits to the Village Square (Summer)**



### Reasons for visiting the Village Square

Respondents were asked to indicate all the reasons why they visited the Village Square. This was a multiple choice question and respondents could tick as many answers as applicable. The majority of respondents, 69% (191), indicated that they used the Village Square to walk through to reach the shops or visit the medical practice based in All Saints Centre. Using the seating areas in the Square was the reason given by 44% (122) respondents. Visiting the Cafe based in the Centre, especially in the summer months when people can sit outside, was cited as a reason to visit the Square by 40% of respondents (113). A place to meet family or friends was the reason given by 35% (97) of respondents.

Three of the least popular reasons for visiting the Village Square were to look at the War Memorial and visit the Labyrinth which both received 10% (29) of responses and to look at the Community Notice Board 20% (56) of responses. Many respondents indicated to the researchers that they were unaware that there was a Labyrinth or a Notice Board in the Village Square which may be one of the reasons for the low rate. One respondent suggested using an Interpretation Board for the Labyrinth to highlight that it is there and to encourage more people to use it.

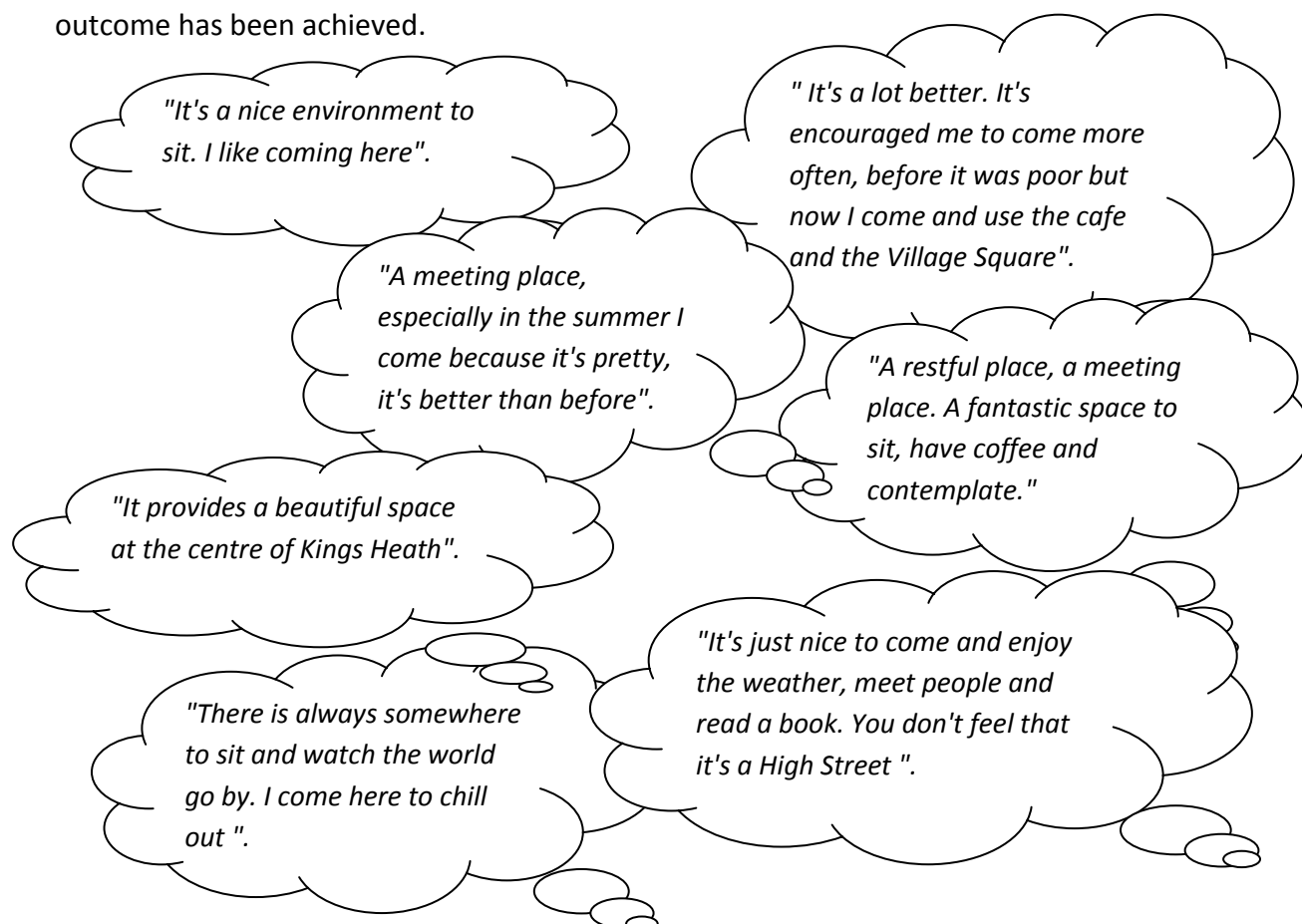
Figure 8 overleaf illustrates the responses.

**Figure 8 Reasons why respondents visit Kings Heath Village Square.**

	Number of people	%Percent
Labyrinth	29	10
Water Feature	52	18
To sit down	122	44
Community Notice Board	56	20
The Landscaping	82	29
War Memorial	29	10
Cafe	113	40
Walk through	191	69
Meet friends/family	97	35
To Play (ping pong etc)	36	13

One of the outcomes of the Changing Spaces, Community Spaces Big Lottery Fund bid was to increase access to quality local spaces and 'increase social capital and community cohesion, with more people of different ages, beliefs, races and interests having the opportunity to interact in shared spaces'.

The above findings and the additional comments from respondents below suggest that this outcome has been achieved.



### 3.4. Kings Heath Village Square offers a Better Local Environment

Another outcome from Changing Spaces, Community Spaces bid was to create:

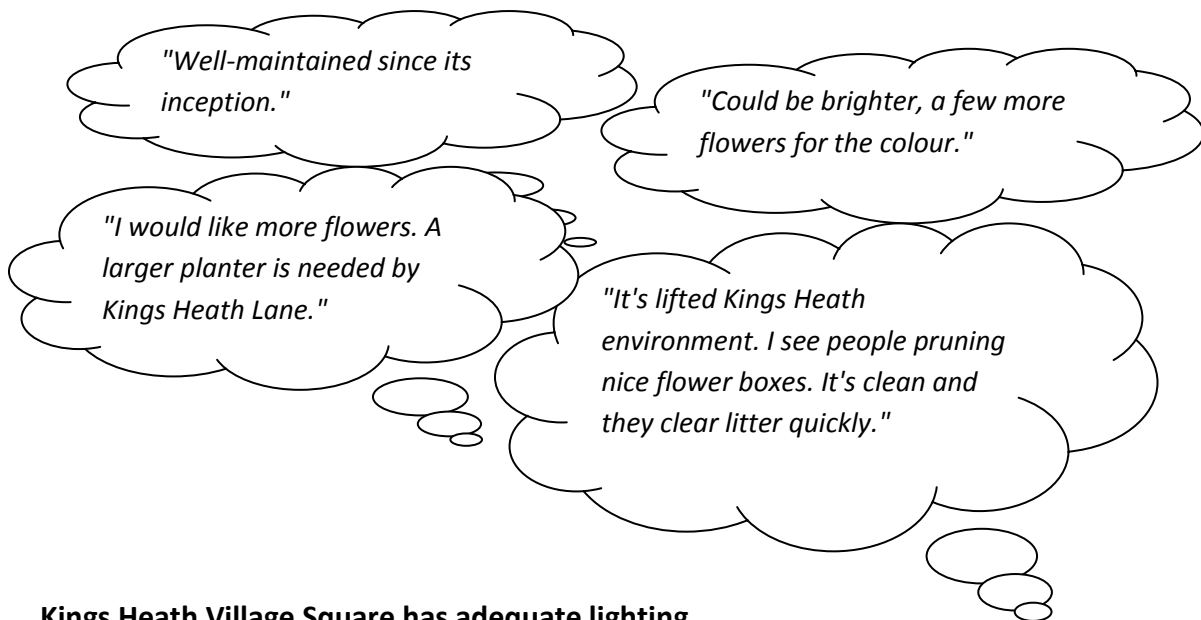
'A better local environment... an increase in the total area of well-designed and well-managed public space.'

The following section will examine the respondents views about the way the Square is maintained, the adequacy of the lighting and whether it offers a safe environment. Then the respondents views on whether the Village Square offers a better local environment for the people and organisations based in Kings Heath will be presented.

### **Kings Heath Village Square is well maintained (lawns, plants etc)**

Respondents were asked to indicate if they thought the Village Square was well-maintained. This question was answered by 266 people. The majority of respondent 95.5% (254) indicated yes, with 1.5% (4) indicating no and 3% (8) responding that they did not know.

The following comments were made in response to this question:

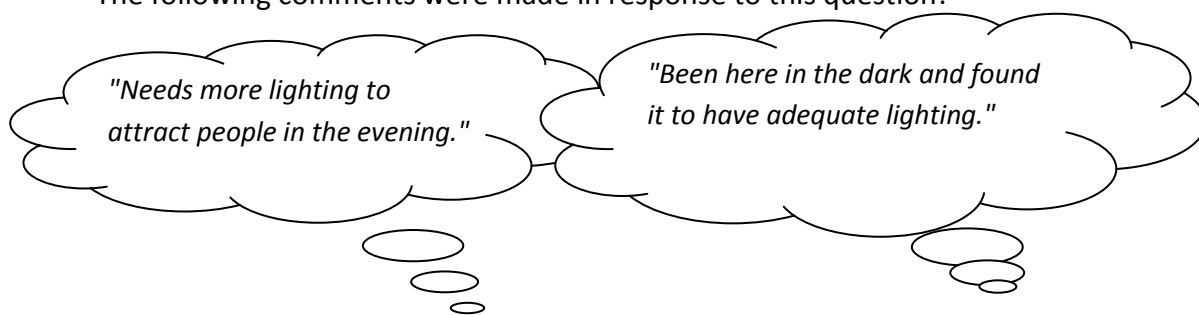


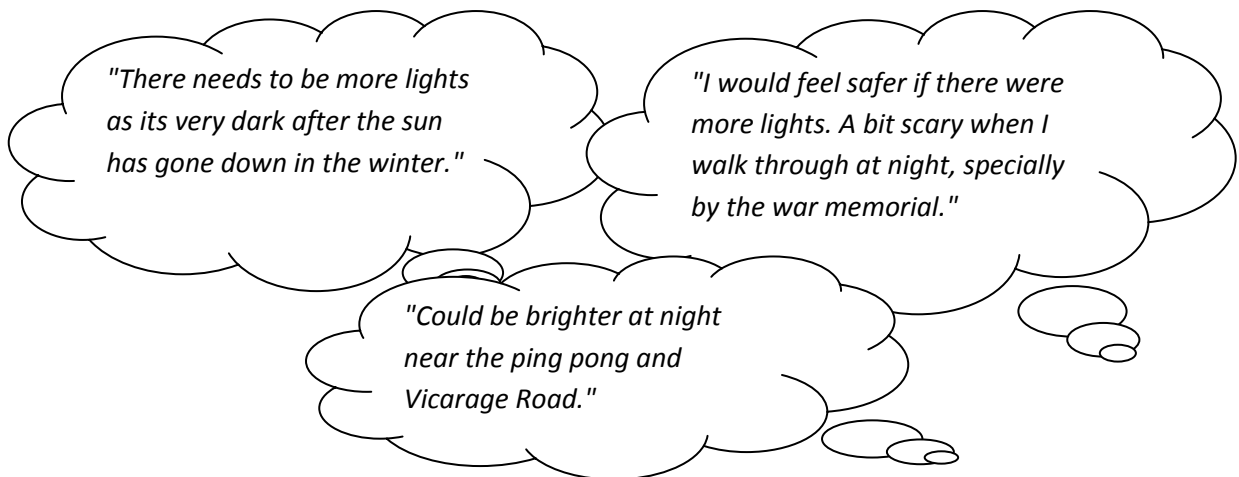
### **Kings Heath Village Square has adequate lighting**

The issue of lighting in the Village Square was raised during the stakeholders meeting to design the survey questions and some stakeholders based in the All Saints Centre indicated that they felt it was inadequate.

Respondents were asked if they felt the Village Square was adequately lit. Many of the respondents, 26% (73) had not visited the Village Square when it was dark so felt unable to answer this question. Of the respondents who had visited the Village Square at night, 57% (150) felt it was adequately lit and 14% (39) felt it was not adequately lit.

The following comments were made in response to this question:

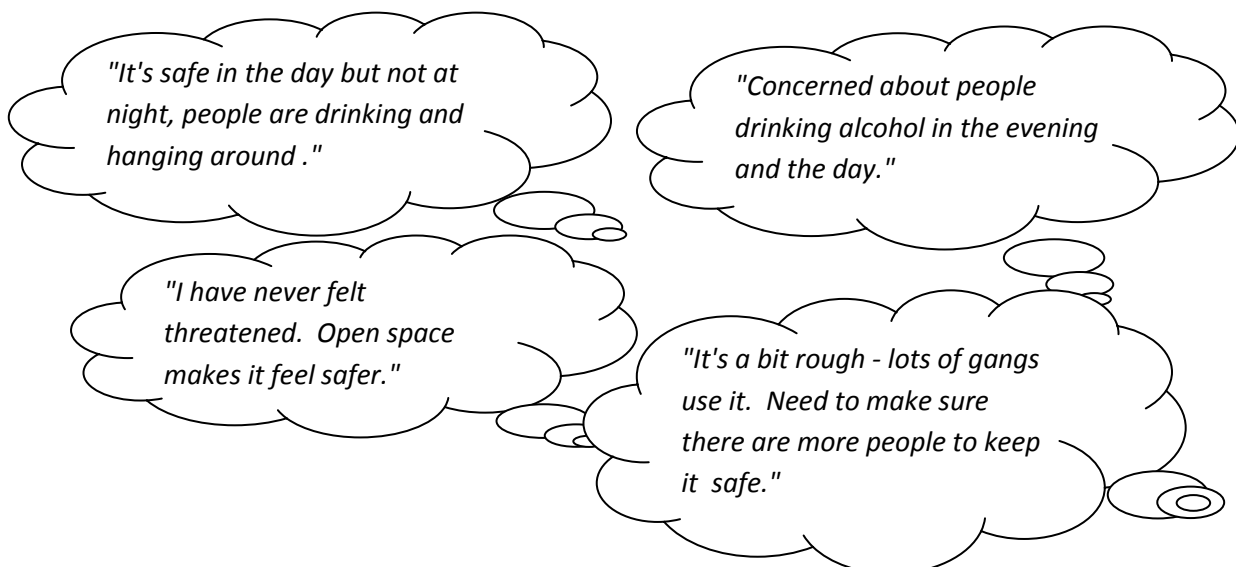




### **Kings Heath Village Square offers a safe environment**

Respondents were asked if they thought the Village Square offered a safe environment. The majority of respondents, 84% (231), believe that the Village Square is a safe environment. This is borne out by the local community police officer who reported that there has been a 60% reduction in reported crime since the Village Square was completed. 8% of respondents did not know if it offered a safe environment. The main reason that 8% of respondents indicated that is not a safe environment was because of people drinking alcohol in the square.

The following comments were made in response to this question:



### **Kings Heath Village Square offers a better local environment for local people and organisations**



The majority of respondents, 96.5% (261) indicated that they thought the Village Square did offer a better environment for people and organisations in Kings Heath. 1.5% (4) respondents believed that it did not offer a better local environment and 2% (5) of respondents indicated that they did not know if it offered a better local environment.

Two respondents did raise concerns about the gravestones that are embedded in the design of the Village Square they commented "I don't like the graves on a path where people walk over them and I would like it to be changed" and "I am concerned about the gravestones being set in the ground because they will deteriorate. I try to step around them. It's a lack of respect for history." However, the positioning of the gravestones did not elicit any other negative comments.

Some of the comments made in response to this question are listed below:

<b>Comments: Does the Village Square offer a better local environment?</b>
Very impressed with it. (Local Business).
It has brought the farmers market to life ..it's a lovely setting. It was irksome and now it is a joy. (Local Business).
Square is very successful. The Square adds something to the High Street nice open space, presents business opportunities. (Local Business).
Customers have noted an improvement in Kings Heath. .. Shops around it are becoming more attractive. (Local Business).
Much better than it was before. (Stakeholder).
I felt Kings Heath was getting 'downtrodden' but with the development it's nice. I stopped coming before because I didn't like the environment.
It's beautiful, I was worried about the graves but they are noticed and it's lovely.
Improves the overall feel to Kings Heath High Street which was beginning to feel neglected.

### **3.5. Benefits / Outcomes of the Village Square**

To further research whether the Village Square had increased the opportunity for people to meet and interact with others, respondents were asked whether they thought having access to Kings Heath Village Square benefited them and the reasons why they did or didn't benefit.

Of the 275 respondents to this question 88% (242) indicated that they thought the Village Square did benefit them, 7.5% (21) respondents felt it did not benefit them and 4.5% (12) respondents didn't know whether they had benefited or not (Figure 9 below).

**Figure 9 Does access to the Village Square benefit you?**

		Access to VS benefit you?			Total
		Don't Know	No	Yes	
Type of participant	Business	6	6	25	37
	Member of the Public	6	15	202	223
	Stakeholder	0	0	15	15
Total		12	21	242	275

### Comments on the benefits of the Village Square

The section below give an overview of some of the comments received from members of the public, local businesses and stakeholders.

#### Members of the Public

Many of the 223 members of the public who responded to this question gave detailed comments. A reoccurring theme from the comments is about the Village Square giving Kings Heath a 'heart' and that it is a 'focus' for Kings Heath and that this is something that was missing before the Village Square was built. Many of the comments also refer to the Village Square being a meeting place and somewhere to go to get to know other people or that it is a place that brings the community together. Two comments were received from respondents who did not feel they had benefited from the creation of the Village Square, these comments were 'It's just a meeting place' and 'I just walk through it'. Some of the other comments from members of the public are displayed overleaf.

#### Comments: Does the Village Square benefit you?

It is somewhere pleasant to sit, eat and meet with friends. Its open aspect means that I always feel safe.

I like the atmosphere particularly in the summer. People are friendly outside. Sit down and talk to strangers. The best thing that has happened to Kings Heath.

It's nice and quite friendly. It's good to be next to the Church. It helps me to get to know people.
People with mental health problems can here, its stress free. An open environment.
It's a nice environment/area. Might benefit everyone who cares about their environment. It's a great asset I hope people keep it clean and tidy.
Just love it! It's the village focal point that we never had.
Kings Heath now has a community spirit because of the Square.
It's a calm oasis amid the shops and traffic. Makes a pleasant park-like atmosphere.
It's a great space and improves the community spirit, a great asset for Kings Heath, makes you proud.
A great public amenity creating a heart in the village. Gives a focal point to Kings Heath.
It provides a beautiful space at the centre of Kings Heath.
I like how its brings the community together.
It's a better urban environment, it makes Kings Heath a nice place to live. It gives a sense of community.
It's pleasant and quiet and beautiful. It gives pleasure and peace of mind and a release of tension from daily work.
It makes me feel better about being in Kings Heath, it's attractive. A positive environment for a range of events and chance meetings.
Opened Kings Heath up and give Kings Heath a 'focus' a 'heart'.

## Stakeholders

15 stakeholders were asked if the Village Square benefited them and/or their organisation all of them confirmed that it did.

The comments from stakeholders are listed below:

**Comments: Does the Village Square benefit you?**

It's a much nicer environment compared to what was there before.
Benefits the organisation & me personally.
The working environment is beautiful because of the Square.
It's inviting. You can sit on the bench. Better than when the wall was around.
Nice place, open and friendly for anyone to use.

## Businesses

Of the 37 businesses who responded to this question, 25 replied that they and/or their business did benefit, 6 respondents indicated that they did not feel they had benefited and 6 did not know if they had benefited or not. Of the respondents who felt they had not benefited the comments were 'I don't go there - too busy at work', 'I don't take breaks from work' and 'I only work in Kings Heath and go straight home after work'.

Some of the comments received are listed below:

Comments: Does the Village Square benefit you?
It's a wonderful, beautiful design and brings the Church, community and businesses together. The crocuses are coming - magic!
Community organising has got a lot better since the Square. The Farmers Market has doubled in business and turnover.
It has increased my pride in the local neighbourhood.
It's an asset to the community... it's good for community to have reasons and spaces to interact with each other. The project is good for the community.
Helps to make links with the local community. It's good for the community.
I feel more a part of the Kings Heath community having the Village Square there. It's somewhere to visit and have a chat.

### 3.6. Additional comments from Stakeholders and Businesses

All respondents were asked a set of core questions, however, stakeholders and businesses were asked additional questions to ascertain their views on:

- 1) How they used the Village Square.
- 2) The impact of the Village square on:
  - improving partnerships,

- increasing the number of people involved in the project,
- attracting new visitors to the High Street,

### 3.6.1. Stakeholder Responses

The 15 stakeholders who were interviewed were either based at the All Saints Centre or their organisation used the Centre and/or The Village Square facilities.

#### Does your Organisation currently make use of the Village Square and how often?

The majority of stakeholders (12) indicated that their organisation did use the Village Square with 3 stakeholders indicating that they did not use it. Of those organisations that used the Village Square during the summer months, 4 stakeholders used it on a daily basis, 2 stakeholders at least once a week, 3 stakeholders at least once a month, 2 stakeholders used it for special events and one stakeholder had used it only once.

#### How does your organisation make use of the Village Square?

Stakeholders were asked to give further responses about how they were using the Village Square. The responses are listed below:

Comments: How does your organisation make use of the Village Square?
More able elderly users will use the Square but seating is not ideal for elderly, there are no arms.
Space to publicise justice issues, e.g. Fair Trade, Amnesty International. Also host pastoral events for example, road safety, Christmas and tying the ribbon for those people who died.
Activities and games / sports areas for young people. Use of gazebos for painting etc, arts
People who are connected with the Church use it for a range of formal and informal activities e.g. meeting, sitting etc as well as activities organised by the youth project etc.
We plant and undertake maintenance of the grounds
If there is an activity going on we sit and watch.
Our summer fete is out there and we try to use it when we can; Christmas Fair outside and inside, Dawn Service and Palm Sunday that halts outside and progresses into the Church with the Donkey..

#### Increased people's access to quality local spaces

All 15 stakeholders agreed that the Village Square had increased access to quality local spaces and had given Kings Heath a space for interaction, play and recreation. One stakeholder commented "Working here daily I see how people and families use it, for example, the table tennis, water feature and picnics in the summer". Another stakeholder stated "There are activities for children, people meet in the cafe, kids gather outside after school. There are various gatherings and markets".

### **An increase in people actively involved in developing and running a project that is visible in their community**

This question addressed the Changing Spaces, Community Spaces Big Lottery Fund outcome of 'Higher levels of participation and volunteering in community projects'. 13 stakeholders agreed that the Village Square had actively involved people in the project, with some citing volunteering opportunities, such as planting, that their service users were involved with. There is evidence from informal discussions that suggests that people who were not part of the church or involved in the All Saints Centre are now volunteering with planting and other activities as a result of the Village Square development. However, several of the stakeholders indicated that they were finding it difficult to recruit new volunteers. Whilst undertaking the survey the researchers gave out volunteering leaflets to respondents to encourage more participation in volunteering opportunities.

### **Improved partnerships between support organisations, communities and authorities**

This question addressed the overall outcome in the Changing Spaces, Community Spaces Big Lottery Fund bid around improving partnerships. The specific focus of 'shared learning through dissemination of good practice' is addressed through the publication of this report and through organising a series of Open Days.

The majority (10) of the stakeholders agreed that the Village Square had contributed to an improvement in partnerships between other organisations and communities and authorities. Four stakeholders felt that the Village Square had not led to an improvement in partnerships.

One stakeholder commented "I work with teenagers on the Square. Communication has been more effective with local schools (since the Square opened)". Another stakeholder, from an organisation that was invited to attend a Road Show on the Village Square felt that the Road Show had increased their referrals and also their links to other organisations.

However, other stakeholders felt that although that while there was the potential to improve partnerships it hadn't yet happened and that it was still "a work in progress". It was also suggested that the Village Square was not promoting itself or its events effectively. One stakeholder commented "The Square is often underused. It could be a really creative space but it needs to be marketed."

### **Suggestions for Events or Activities in the Village Square**

Stakeholders were asked to think about how the Village Square could be used by their organisations. The suggestions are listed below:

<b>Comments: Suggestions for Events or Activities in the Village Square</b>
'Make a difference' volunteer day. Would like to promote the Day Care activities more.

Drama, mystery plays, the Square brings 'reality' to the church meeting youths etc.
Yes – possibly a musical and/or religious event involving choirs and instrumental music.
Flash Mob, Speakers Corner for young people and the community.
Health Campaign... Newsletter could be better informed about what is happening in the Square – schedule of events etc.
Could hold a plant sales as a spin off – have a stall – fund raising as a contribution to maintenance. Publicity on what we do . get more volunteers.
We trialed a mobile arts stage – we are thinking of using some staging for showcasing work; talent shows, theatre etc. .
Fundraising activities are easier to do because of being more visible i.e. reaching more people and passers by. The Square needs something which can adapt to the weather i.e. a form of shelter
More school visits for example on Citizenship. Also a memorial garden at the rear of the church.
More different types of markets and community initiatives; Tenants could promote themselves and local businesses.
World Mental Health Day Event in October (a lot of clients come from South Birmingham)
Things are happening but we need information about what is going on in the Square. . We can then pass on information to clients and friends.

These suggestions could be included in a Village Square Development Plan. The activities would encourage new users, including those with high level of needs, to the Village Square as well as generating income.

## Conclusion

Overall, the stakeholders who were interviewed believed the Village Square had increased peoples access to a quality open space. However, there is scope for further work with stakeholders (existing and new) on developing activities and promotions that could be based in the Village Square. One stakeholder spoke about the Road Show that was held last summer when she had spoken to other stakeholders ".and shared literature (about her organisation) it was a good way to 'cross pollinate' services." One area of concern that was raised by stakeholders was the lack of marketing and promotion of events and activities in the Square and also the lack of marketing of the stakeholders based in the centre.

### 3.6.2. Local Business Responses

The 39 businesses who were interviewed were either based in the High Street or surrounding areas or used the All Saints Centre or Village Square in a business capacity, such as the Farmers Market or Craft Fair.

#### Does your business currently make use of the Village Square?

Of the 39 businesses asked this question, 37 responded. The majority, 21 businesses, did use the Village Square and these were the businesses that had stalls at the market or fairs. None of the businesses who were interviewed and who are based on the High Street or surrounding areas used the Village Square.

#### Suggestions for Events or Activities in the Village Square

Businesses were asked if they had any suggestions for how their business could make use of the Village Square.

Comments: Suggestions for Events or Activities in the Village Square
It is difficult for Timpson to do a demo - Health and safety issues with shoe repairs etc. Not really for me to decide as Timpson is a chain.
Difficult for a financial company.
A tent display but will need to check with the company. Sports stuff for kids. Ping pong tournament. - good for kids and then parents will come.
General promotion events. Food and craft fairs.
LA Fitness could run some events. . Health checks- eating habits etc.
Other sporting events.
Could buy advertising space in the Square. Local businesses could have stalls at the markets.
Independent shops day. Festive things and events - can be advertised.

Businesses were keen to use the square for advertising purposes, however, there are restrictions on banners and adverts in the Square enforced by Birmingham City Council.

#### The Village Square has created a land mark that will attract new visitors to the High Street

All businesses were asked if they thought the Village Square was attracting new visitors to the High Street. Of the 39 businesses interviewed, the majority (20) agreed that new visitors were attracted to Kings Heath High Street as a result of the Village Square. Eight businesses indicated that the Village Square did not attract new visitors and 11 businesses didn't know if the Village Square had attracted new visitors. Overall businesses indicated that the



recession had impacted on their takings and so it was difficult to judge the impact of the Village Square.

One business stated " It draws people away from my business in Heathfield Road but contributes to the local area as a whole so a mixed effect. Not exactly drawing more people to Kings Heath" .

The lack of marketing of events was also raised with one business commenting " There needs to be more information and publicity about what is here and what fairs are on. It took me a while to know about the Square and the business opportunities available".

### **Suggestions and comments for events and further improvements**

All business respondents were asked for their suggestions about events or activities they would like to see take place in the Square.

<b>Comments: Suggestions and Comments</b>
Celebratory days for different cultural backgrounds, what they eat etc and sharing with different communities. Possibly with a family fun day at same time for kids to stay and play.
More markets of various forms, it would be good to have the markets combined more to create a bigger event and better attendance. A clothes market.
Weddings, other places like Bourneville have weddings and Wedding Fairs.
Chinese New Year, St Georges Day, egg and spoon race, tug of war, village fete for local traders. Traders can get out and visit each other - gives Kings Heath its 'stamp' on the map. Make a big cake and sell/raffle it for Valentine's Day. Have food events at night, use a Town Crier.
Live music - Folk etc, culture, Arts Fair, Morris Dancing, could put on a play, Fitness/Health events, Flea Market, community events for kids.
A small stage, a raised platform would definitely get used. Local people could put on events e.g. Folk Festival. I would like to go to the Square on a summer evening and have a drink - a quiet beer. When events are on there should be a bar.

### **Conclusion**

Many businesses felt that the Village Square did not effectively advertise the events and activities that were held there. Comments about the lack advertising included "A newsletter (is needed) to businesses and residents about what events are on. General advertising of the Square" , "No communication to businesses at North End Parade" , "I don't know what is going in the Village Square" and "We never hear anything about it (Village Square)".

The market traders were clearly benefiting from the development of the Village Square, however, an opportunity also exists to engage with local businesses based on the High Street and surrounding areas and discuss how they could make use of the Square.

### **3.7. Suggestions for events/features**

All respondents were asked for their views on what features or activities they would like to see in the Village Square.

The majority of comments focused on five areas. These areas were:

- Arts / Performance based Activities.
- Planting and the Environment.
- Markets / Fairs.
- History / Educational.
- Children's / Sports based Events.

#### **Arts based Activities**

The majority of suggestions and comments were about arts based or performance based activities. Live musical events were the most popular, closely followed by drama productions and open air theatre events. Other suggestions were for cultural activities, artistic events and public art features such as sculptures.

#### **Planting and the Environment**

Several respondents mentioned that they would like to see more flowers in the Square with hanging baskets and tubs with lots of colour in them, one respondent commented " it would be nice to have hanging baskets to brighten up the area."

The safety of the cobbled paths and the stones around the water feature after it had been turned on was also raised. One respondent stated "Its boggy around the fountain. This could be improved." Another respondent suggested having a rail erected that people could use in icy weather.

#### **Markets / Fairs**

Lots of respondents suggested having more markets on the Village Square. The suggestions included antique markets, car boot sales, summer fairs, cake sales, fetes and more Farmers Markets and Craft Fairs.

#### **History / Educational**

The main suggestions from this theme were for:

- 1) An Interpretation board about ".. the history of the Church, where the Vicarage used to stand giving it the name Vicarage Road. You could do brass rubbings of the gravestones.."

2) An Archive Room. Local people could be asked for any information and pictures they have that could be digitised and accessed through a PC in the Archive Room. One respondent stated "This could benefit people with dementia."

### **Children's / Sports based Events**

A number of games such as giant jenga, giant chess, giant draughts and swing ball were proposed by young people and their parents. Face painting,, children's entertainers, storytelling and a trampoline and bouncy castle were also popular with the respondents.

A games area on the Square was also proposed with basketball and football being cited as something young people would like to play.

### **3.8 Focus Group Analysis**

One of the objectives of the research was to examine new opportunities for the use of the Village Square by beneficiary groups, particularly those with high levels of need.

To address this objective, Focus Groups were held with service users from KINMOS Volunteer Group Ltd who support people with mental health issues, Robins Court, which provides housing for older people and the Inclusion Youth Group based at All Saints Centre, Kings Heath.

The following sections detail the suggestions and comments received at these focus groups.

#### **3.8.1. Focus Group: KINMOS Volunteer Group Ltd**

Attended by 9 service users.

#### **Reasons for visiting the Village Square**

The majority of the respondents from KINMOS did visit the Village Square and cited the following reasons for their visits:

- Sitting in the Square.
- Visiting the Café.
- Walking through to shops / buses.
- Reading the gravestones.
- Putting poppies on the war memorial.

However, the respondents were not really aware of any activities or events that had or were planned to take place. This suggests that publicity about future events needs to be evaluated to ensure that groups such as KINMOS are given this information.

#### **Suggestions for future events/activities**

The majority of the discussion focused on the events the participants would like to see in the Village Square, particularly those events or promotions that would benefit people with

mental health issues. The group were keen to work with the All Saints Community Development Company on how they could better make use of the Village Square.

The suggestions are listed below:

<b>Comments: Suggestions for future events/activities/improvements</b>
An information table for KINMOS (eg 'Afraid to Speak' TV campaign) of other promotions that challenge the stigmas attached to mental health.
Promotional / fundraising events for KINMOS such as jumble sales.
A chance for KINMOS service users to talk to the public about what mental health problems are actually like to help people understand people with mental health problems.
Promote Square (and KINMOS) on Twitter and Facebook.
Face painting, Morris dancing, Line dancing.
Choirs / singing, bouncy castle, tombola, teddy bear picnic.
A smoking shelter.

### **Does the Village Square benefit you?**

Most of the participants felt the Village Square did benefit them. However, it was also felt that it could be used more effectively to promote mental health issues and the KINMOS organisation. It was proposed that closer links need to be established between the All Saints Community Development Company and KINMOS.

### **3.8.2. Focus Group: Inclusion Youth Group**

Attended by 5 young people (between the ages of 12 and 17 years).

#### **Reasons for visiting the Village Square**

The respondents visited All Saints Centre to attend the youth group and used the Village Square to undertake activities such as table tennis and basketball. The respondents also indicated that they arranged to meet friends in the Village Square. The majority of the respondents knew about the Labyrinth and war memorial and all of them liked the water feature.

#### **Do you feel the Village Square offers a safe environment?**

All the respondents felt the Square was too dark and needed more lighting to make it safer during the winter evenings. They also felt it was unsafe at night because they had seen people drinking in the Square (sitting on the benches with plastic bags full of cans).

### **Suggestions for future events/activities**

This question really engaged the respondents and they proposed a number of activities and events.

<b>Comments: Suggestions for future events/activities/improvements</b>
B-B-Q on Friday nights with a volunteer to do the cooking.
A Beauty Bar with mobile hairdressers, barbers, nail bar, makeup opportunities.
Live music, underage raves, basketball.
A sandpit or beach during the summer months.
A swimming pool, a bouncy castle.
A big screen for showing football and films.
A pick and mix bar, popcorn/milkshake stall.
A campout night (for charity).

### **3.8.3. Focus Group: Robins Court, unsupported housing for older people**

Attended by 8 residents and Kings Heath Community Police Officer.

#### **How often do you visit the Village Square?**

Some of the residents catch a bus into Kings Heath and they felt that the Village Square had enhanced the town. Other residents had mobility issues and were unable to catch a bus or walk far and felt they would be unable to attend events and activities in the Village Square because of this. Robins Court does have a minibus that can be used for transporting residents and the community police officer stated that one of his colleagues may be able to drive the minibus to the Village Square when events are taking place.

#### **What are your favourite features in the Village Square?**

Two participants said they liked and used the seating areas in the Village Square. However, only one participant knew there was a Labyrinth. This led to a discussion about the lack of marketing and advertising about events and features in the Square. It was suggested that Robins Court could be emailed a monthly flyer detailing 'What's on in the Village Square' and this could be displayed on the notice board.

A number of respondents also stated that they knew there was a Farmers Market and Craft Fair in the Village Square, however they were not aware of the frequency and which Saturdays they were held. One respondent stated "they need to advertise better, we need flyers for events, we don't know what is happening there".

### **What events or activities would you like to see in the Village Square?**

This question led to a lively discussion about the activities the participants would like to see take place in the Village Square. Three of the more active residents had enjoyed listening to music in the Village Square and felt there should be more musical events. One resident felt that the church could use the Square more and suggested that open air services could be held during the summer. Two of the residents mentioned that the Square would be an ideal venue for 'live statue' performances. The list of suggestions is as follows:

<b>Comments: Suggestions for future events/activities/improvements.</b>
Open air church service in the summer months.
A big cinema screen.
Live music, Indian/African bands from different cultural backgrounds (the sitar was cited as an example).
Punch and Judy show , Fun Fair.

### **Do you think having access to the Village Square benefits you?**

The respondents had a discussion about the benefits of the Village Square. The less mobile respondents were unable to really contribute to this discussion because they had not had many opportunities to visit the Square.

Overall, the respondents felt that having access to the Village Square had benefited them with one respondent stating "The Square is a nice place where people who live on their own can mix with people and watch the world go by". Other comments included "Passing by on the bus its looks very clean, its improved Kings Heath" and 'Nice benches, church looks much nicer".

### **Conclusion**

The less mobile residents of Kings Heath are unable to fully benefit from the range of activities available in the Village Square because of transport issues. One respondent (not a

resident of Robins Court) suggested a coach service could be available to take less mobile people to the Village Square when there is an event on. The respondent stated " I am old and live alone so this would be good for social interaction". This is something that could be considered when organising events to ensure that people with additional needs are included in activities.

## **4.0. Conclusion**

The Kings Heath Village Square Project development, implementation and consultation process during the design and construction stage of the Village Square were considered to be successful. There were several factors identified that contributed to the success of the Village Square development stage, such as the strong partnership approach adopted by the original Steering Group and the time and effort that went into planning the project before applying for funding.

The evidence suggests that Village Square has met the aspirations of local people and organisations. It has become a meeting place, a place to sit and contemplate and somewhere to stage events and activities. Some respondents stated that the Village Square was the 'heart' of Kings Heath and gave it a 'focal' that the Village did not have before.

One clear message from the review was that organisations, businesses and local people do not feel that the Village Square is either promoting itself or advertising its events and activities effectively.

The focus groups also supported the view that the marketing of events needs to improve and a process needs to be developed that ensures local people, especially those with high levels of need, are informed about future events.

All respondents were asked what events or activities they would like to see in the Village Square and there was a very enthusiastic response. The majority of respondents indicated that they would like to see arts / performance arts activities such as plays, live music and other live performances.

The evidence and responses from the 305 people interviewed or who attended a focus group suggest that the Village Square is a success and that it has become a focal point that brings together people from all over Kings Heath.

### **Changing Spaces, Community Spaces**

There were four outcomes of the Changing Spaces, Community Spaces Big Lottery Fund and based on the evidence these have all been achieved. The majority of respondents believe that the Village Square has:

- 1) Created a better local environment
- 2) Increased access to local quality spaces
- 3) Improved partnerships between support organisations, communities and authorities
- 4) Increased people actively involved in a practical environmental project



## **5.0. Recommendations**

There are ten key recommendations for the way similar projects should be undertaken in the future.

### **Lessons Learned for Future Projects**

- 1) 1) A project needs to be well thought through, well developed and deliverable before funding is sought. It is essential that the funding fits the well developed project (as happened with the Village Square project) rather making the project fit the funding. So plan the project, keep it updated and then look for appropriate funding.
- 2) The Big Lottery could consider simplifying the funding requirements on these types of major construction projects, some of the requirements were extremely specific and stringent and contributed to a delay in completion.
- 3) The support of the local authority and local councillors is essential for the success of a urban space project.
- 4) A dedicated (paid) project manager is essential for these types of major construction projects.
- 5) Have the right people with the right skills on the Project Steering group.
- 6) Spend time and effort to find the right landscape architect who understands the vision and the project.
- 7) Having a consultation process that really engages the local communities, schools and other project stakeholders is essential to the successful of this type of project.

### **Contractors**

- 8) There should be clear lines of responsibility between the contractors and a project Steering Group.
- 9) It is important to separate governance and delivery.
- 10) Follow the procedures that are applied in the real world. Ensure the professionals to negotiate penalties for late delivery etc. Ensure that contractors have a financial penalty if they are the cause of a delay. This will have to be balanced against the increase in contract cost that would result.

**Based on the overall findings of the review , nine key recommendations are made:**

- 1) Recruit a Village Square Activities Facilitator who can organise a range of events and activities based on the suggestions from the Review. Some of these events can be income generating.
- 2) Develop a Marketing Strategy to ensure that the Village Square is effectively promoted to local businesses, organisations and communities with a focus on ensuring that groups that support people with additional needs are aware of forthcoming events and activities. One suggestion was to email a List of Events, on a monthly basis, to local organisations and community groups so that it can be displayed on their Notice Boards.
- 3) Create an Interpretation board for the Labyrinth so that people know what it is and how to use it
- 4) Raise awareness of the Notice Board in the middle of the Square through bigger signage. Many respondents did not know there was a Notice Board but indicated they would use it now they knew it was there.
- 5) Work with community transport and volunteers to provide transport to events in the Village Square for people who are less mobile.
- 6) Develop a Business Development Strategy for working with local organisations who support people with high level of need to offer them the opportunity for promotional days e.g. Mental Health and to identify other ways that organisations can benefit from having access to the Village Square.
- 7) Develop a Business Development Strategy to work with local businesses, particularly the independent businesses, on identifying ways they could use the Village Square. None of the businesses located on the High Street or surrounding areas who participated in the research were using the Square and this is an area that could benefit shops on the High Street and also provide an income stream for the Square.
- 8) Use the Square for a mid week market such as an antique market or other specialist market.
- 9) Invite groups (local and national) to attend monthly open days (10 per year) to describe how the All Saints Community Development Company turned the aspiration of developing a Village Square into a reality. (This recommendation address the specific focus of 'shared learning through dissemination of good practice in the Changing Spaces, Community Spaces bid).

## APPENDIX 1

## SURVEY SCHEDULES



<b>Office use only</b> Researchers Name:	
Location:	Date:

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## **EY FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC KINGS HEATH VILLAGE SQUARE**

### **Introduction to respondents**

### **Kings Heath Village Square Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to gain an understanding of your views on the Village Square and to identify how you think the Square could be further developed and improved. The survey is being undertaken for the All Saints Community Development Company, by Community Pathways CIC, which is an independent research company.

Anything you say here will be treated in confidence and we will not identify you in any way in reporting your comments and opinions. All completed surveys will be destroyed within 3 months.

**Would you like to take part in this research?**

Yes ☐ No ☐



<b>Office use only</b> Researchers Name:	
Location:	Date:

## **SURVEY FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

### **KINGS HEATH VILLAGE SQUARE**

#### **Introduction to respondents**

#### **Kings Heath Village Square Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to gain an understanding of your views on the Village Square and to identify how you think the Square could be further developed and improved. The survey is being undertaken for the All Saints Community Development Company, by Community Pathways CIC, which is an independent research company.

Anything you say here will be treated in confidence and we will not identify you in any way in reporting your comments and opinions. All completed surveys will be destroyed within 3 months.

**Would you like to take part in this research?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

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**1) How often do you visit Kings Heath Square at this time of year? (Please tick appropriate box below)**

Daily	2 – 4 times per week	Weekly	Occasionally	Never

Further response if given

.....  
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**2) How often do you visit Kings Heath Square during the summer? (Please tick appropriate box below)**

Daily	2 – 4 times per week	5 – 6 times per week	Weekly	Occasionally	Never

Further response if given

.....  
 .....

**3) Thinking about the summer months could you indicate all reasons that you visit the Square? (Tick as many as apply)**

The Labyrinth		The water feature		The seating	
To look at the Community Notice Board		The Landscaping		The plants / trees	
The War Memorial		The cafe (outside seating in the summer)		None of the above	

**Are there any other reasons you may visit the Square?**

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**4) Are there any other features, events or activities you would like to see take place in the Square?**

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**5) Could you look at the following statements and indicate whether or not you agree with them. Do you think the Village Square is...?:**  
 (Please tick as appropriate)

	FEATURES	Yes	No	Don't Know
(a)	Well maintained (lawns and plants)?			
Additional Comments:				
(b)	Has adequate lighting?			
Additional Comments:				
(c)	Offers a safe environment?			
Additional Comments:				
(d)	Offers a better local environment for Kings Heath?			
Additional Comments:				

**Addition Comments:**

(If no to any question above please specify the reason)

.....  
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**5) Do you think having access to the Village Square benefits you? (Please tick as appropriate)**

☐

**Yes (Please specify below the reasons why you benefit)**

☐

**No (Please specify below the reasons why you do not benefit)**

☐

**Don't know**

**Additional Comments**

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**6) Have you any further suggestions for improving the Square?**

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**Monitoring Information**

**1) Gender**



Female	
Male	
Prefer not to answer	

2) Could you indicate your ethnicity please?

White	
Black or Black British	
Asian or Asian British	
Mixed	
Chinese	
Other ethnic group (please specify).....	
Prefer not to answer	

3) Could you please indicate which age range applies to you?

16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 -64	65+	Prefer not to say

4) Do you have any longstanding illness or disability? By longstanding we mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time.

No ☐ Yes ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

5) Could you tell us the first 3 digits of your postcode please?

**Thank you for responding to this survey**



<b>Office use only</b> Researchers Name:	Time:
Name of Organisation:	Date:

## **SURVEY FOR STAKEHOLDERS KINGS HEATH VILLAGE SQUARE**

### **Introduction for respondents**

#### **Kings Heath Village Square Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to gain an understanding of your views on the Village Square and to identify how you think the Square could be further developed and improved. The survey is being undertaken for the All Saints Community Development Company, by Community Pathways CIC, which is an independent research company.

Anything you say will be treated in confidence and we will not identify you in any way in reporting your comments and opinions. All completed surveys will be destroyed within 3 months.

Your views are important to us and we will take in account what you tell us when looking at future improvements. The results of this survey will be available on the Kings Health Village Square website.

**Would you like to take part in this research?**

**Yes**

☐

**No**

☐

**Section 1: The Implementation of the Village Square**

## Project

We would like to find out your views about the way the Village Square project was implemented.

1) Was your organisation involved in the planning and design of the Village Square?

Yes		(Please go to Q2)
No		(Please go to Q3)
Do Not Know		(Please go to Q3)

2) If you answered yes to Q1, how was your organisation involved?

.....

.....

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3) In your opinion has the Village Square project delivered the following outcomes?

		Yes	no	Do not know
i)	Created a better local environment for local organisations and the people of Kings Heath?			
Additional Comments:				
ii)	Increased people's access to quality local spaces for interaction, play and recreation?			
Additional Comments:				
iii)	An increase in people actively involved in developing and running a practical environment project that is visible in their community?			
Additional Comments:				

iv)	Improved partnerships between support organisations, communities and authorities			
Additional Comments:				

If you have any further comments or have answered no to any of the questions overleaf please use the space below to tell us the reason(s):

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## Section 2: Use of the Village Square

We would like to find out how your organisation makes use of the Village Square or how you think it could use the Square in the future.

4) Does your business currently make use of the Village Square? (Please tick appropriate box below)

Yes		(If yes, please go to Q5 + Q6)
No		(If no, please go to Q7)
Do Not Know		(Please go to Q6)

5) If you answered yes to Q4), how often does your organisation use the Square during the summer months? (Please tick appropriate box below)

(a)		On a daily basis
(b)		At least once a week
(c)		At least once a month
(d)		Other (please specify)

If you have any other comments please use the space below:

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6) If you answered yes to Q4, please clarify in the space below how your organisation makes use of the Village Square:

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7) Can you think of any activities or events your organisation or other local organisations could use the Village Square for?

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### Section 3: Improvements or Suggestions

We are interested in finding out your views, as an individual, of the Village Square and if there are any improvements you would like to see undertaken.

8) Thinking about the winter months, how often do you visit the Village Square?  
(Please tick the appropriate box below)

Never	Occasionally	Weekly	2 – 4 times per week	5 – 6 times per week	Daily

If you have any other comments please use the space below:

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9) Thinking about the summer months, how often do you visit the Village Square?  
(Please tick appropriate box below)

Never	Occasionally	Weekly	2 – 4 times per week	5 – 6 times per week	Daily

If you have any other comments please use the space below:

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10) Thinking about the summer months could you indicate all the reasons why you visit the Square? (Please tick as many boxes as applicable).

The Labyrinth		The water feature		To sit down	
Look at Community Notice Board		The Landscaping / plants / trees		Visit the War Memorial	
Visit the cafe (outside seating in the summer)		Walk through to go to shops etc		Meet with friends	
To play		None of the above			

Are there any other reason(s) you may visit the Square?

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If you have any further comments please use the space below:

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11) Are there any other features, events or activities you would like to see in the Square?

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12) Could you look at the following statements and indicate whether or not you agree with them. Do you think the Village Square is...?:  
(Please tick as appropriate)

		Yes	No	Don't Know
(a)	Well maintained (lawns and plants)?			
Additional Comments:				
(b)	Has adequate lighting?			

<b>Additional Comments:</b>				
<b>(c)</b>	<b>Offers a safe environment?</b>			
<b>Additional Comments:</b>				

If you have any further comments or answered no to any of the questions above please specify the reason(s) below:

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**13) Do you think having access to the Village Square benefits you? (Please tick the appropriate box below)**

☐

**Yes (Please specify below the reasons why you benefit)**

☐

**No (Please specify below the reasons why you do not benefit)**

☐

**Don't know**

**Please give details below:**

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**14) Have you any further suggestions for improving the Square? Please make your comments below:**

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**Monitoring Information**

(Could you please complete to ensure our survey is inclusive?)

**1) Gender**

Female	
Male	
Prefer not to answer	

**2) Could you indicate your ethnicity please?**

White	
Black or Black British	
Asian or Asian British	
Mixed	
Chinese	
Other ethnic group (please specify).....	
Prefer not to answer	

**3) Could you please indicate which age range applies to you?**

16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 -64	65+	Prefer not to say

**4) Do you have any longstanding illness or disability? By longstanding we mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time.**

No ☐ Yes ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

**5) Could you tell us the first 3 digits of your postcode please?**

**Thank you for responding to this survey**





<b>Office use only</b> Researchers Name:	Time:
Name of Business:	Date:

## **SURVEY FOR BUSINESSES**

### **KINGS HEATH VILLAGE SQUARE**

#### **Introduction to respondents**

#### **Kings Heath Village Square Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to gain an understanding of your views on the Village Square and to identify how you think the Square could be further developed and improved. The survey is being undertaken for the All Saints Community Development Company, by Community Pathways CIC, which is an independent research company.

Anything you say will be treated in confidence and we will not identify you in any way in reporting your comments and opinions. All completed surveys will be destroyed within 3 months.

Your views are important to us and we will take in account what you tell us when looking at future improvements. The results of this survey will be available on the Kings Health Village Square website.

**Would you like to take part in this research?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

#### **Section 1: The Implementation of the Village Square Project**

We would like to find out your views about the way the Village Square project was implemented.

2) Was your business involved in the planning and design of the Village Square?

Yes		(Please go to Q2)
No		(Please go to Q3)
Do Not Know		(Please go to Q3)

3) If you answered yes to Q1, how was your business involved?

.....

.....

.....

4) In your opinion, has the Village Square Project delivered the following outcomes?

		Yes	no	Do not know
i)	Created a better local environment for local businesses and the people of Kings Health?			
Additional Comments:				
ii)	Created a land mark that will attract new visitors to the high street to the benefit of local retailers?			
Additional Comments:				

If you have any further comments or have answered no to any of the questions above please use the space below to tell us the reason(s):

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## Section 2: Use of the Village Square

We would like to find out how your business makes use of the Village Square or how you think it could use the Village Square in the future.

4) Does your business currently make use of the Village Square? (Please tick appropriate box below)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	(If yes, please go to Q5)
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	(If no, please go to Q6)
Do not Know	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Please go to Q6)

5) If you answered yes to Q4, please clarify, in the space below, how your business makes use of the Village Square:

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6) Can you think of any activities or events your business or other local businesses could use the Village Square for? Please make your comments below.

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### Section 3: Improvements and Suggestions

We are interested in finding out your views, as an individual, of the Village Square and to identify if there are any improvements you would like to see undertaken.

7) Do you visit the Village Square?

☐

Yes (Please go to Q8)

☐

No (Please go to Q11)

☐

Don't know (Please go to Q11)

8) Thinking about the winter months, how often do you visit the Village Square? (Please tick appropriate box below)

Never	Occasionally	Weekly	2 – 4 times per week	5 – 6 times per week	Daily

If you have any other comments please use the space below:

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9) Thinking about the summer months, how often do you visit the Village Square?  
(Please tick appropriate box below)

Never	Occasionally	Weekly	2 – 4 times per week	5 – 6 times per week	Daily

If you have any other comments please use the space below:

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10) Thinking about the summer months could you indicate all the reasons why you visit the Square? (Please tick as many boxes as applicable).

The Labyrinth		The water feature		To sit down	
Look at Community Notice Board		The Landscaping / plants / trees		Visit the War Memorial	
Visit the cafe (outside seating in the summer)		Walk through to go to shops or centre etc		Meet with friends	
To play		None of the above			

Are there any other reason(s) why you may visit the Square?

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If you have any other comments please use the space below:

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 11) Are there any other features, events or activities you would like to see in the Square?

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12) Could you look at the following statements and indicate whether or not you agree with them. Do you think the Village Square is...?:  
 (Please tick as appropriate)

		Yes	No	Don't Know
(a)	Well maintained (lawns and plants)?			
Additional Comments:				
(b)	Has adequate lighting?			
Additional Comments:				
(c)	Offers a safe environment?			
Additional Comments:				

If you have any further comments or answered no to any of the questions above please specify the reason(s) below:

.....  
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15) Do you think that having access to the Village Square benefits you? (Please tick the appropriate box below)

☐

**Yes (Please specify below the reason(s) why you benefit)**

☐

**No (Please specify below the reason(s) why you do not benefit)**

☐

**Don't know**

**Please give details below:**

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**16) Have you any further suggestions for improving the Square? Please make your comments below:**

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**Monitoring Information**

**1) Gender**

Female	
Male	
Prefer not to answer	

**2) Could you indicate your ethnicity please?**

White	
Black or Black British	
Asian or Asian British	
Mixed	
Chinese	
Other ethnic group (please specify).....	
Prefer not to answer	

**3) Could you please indicate which age range applies to you?**

16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 -64	65+	Prefer not to say

**4) Do you have any longstanding illness or disability? By longstanding we mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time.**

No ☐ Yes ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

**5) Could you tell us the first 3 digits of your postcode please?**

**Thank you for responding to this survey**