

Power to the pedestrians in St. George's Square

by Paul Cachia - pcachia@di-ve.com

St George's Square is to be transformed from a congested parking area into a paved pedestrian piazza aimed at 'kick-starting' the long-awaited regeneration of Valletta.

The new square is expected to become a tourist attraction and is intended to soak up the pomp of the Grandmaster's palace which overlooks it.

Republic Street will be pedestrianised in front of the Grandmaster's palace as well as closing off Old Theatre Street down the side of the Casino Maltese.

The original project had to be reviewed after the discovery of a passageway under the square that connects the square with the Palace on Archbishop Street.

Another passageway that leads under the Main Guard portico was found to be blocked. Plans for an underground car park had to be shelved following this discovery.

The project was eventually downsized to merely an embellishment of the square.

The MEPA board on Thursday gave the green light to new plans amid traffic concerns.

The square is currently being used as an open-air car park, mostly reserved for MPs, and serves as pick-up point for horse-drawn carriages popularly known as 'karrozzini', which include a lightweight canopy to provide shade for the horses.

The Sette Giugno monument will be shifted to the left to bring it in line with the transverse axis of the new design scheme.

The De Rohan fountains at the corners of the Main Guard will be retained and a new water feature is being proposed.

FACT BOX



ST GEORGE'S SQUARE

In pictures - [The Square throughout the years](#)

The design concept

- ▶ The design concept took into consideration the historic developments and needs of the Square.
- ▶ The importance of water and a fountain in the Square cannot but be over emphasised.
- ▶ The importance of presenting the Place as a whole square and not as a Square with a road segmenting the Square into two pieces.
- ▶ All Auberges having a square in front of their main facade.

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However, there is no mention of a replica of the Wignacourt fountain and the Verdala's column, which used to grace the square in the past.

The proposed materials for the paving are porfido slabs with a central lava section and a hardstone border at the edge, similar to the pavement used in Merchants Street.

The project is expected to start the day after Sette Giugno and will take 5 months to complete.
