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## **Old Eldon Square to be “Jewel in the heart of the city centre”**

The transformation of a city landmark begins next week, as work starts on returning Old Eldon Square to former glories.

Hoardings closing the square to the public will go up this Monday (September 24) allowing work to start restoring the square to how it looked at the turn of the last century.

The new look square, the only green space in Newcastle city centre, will be entirely re-landscaped with new grass, flower beds, trees, shrubberies, walkways and seating.

The square will also light up the city centre with blue lights marking the pathways at night, lanterns ringing the perimeter and lights highlighting the trees – making the square both stunning to look at and safe to be in.

At the heart of the square, Newcastle’s iconic War memorial will be fully cleaned and restored, and will be lit up at night by dramatic new floodlights.

The square’s original sandstone wall with pillars and metal rail will be recreated around the north and west sides of the grass.

The landscaping works taking place will complement the £170m redevelopment of Eldon Square shopping centre by Capital Shopping Centres and Newcastle City Council.. These works will enhance pedestrian access to the new look Eldon Square bus station and to the 7 new stores on Blakettbridge as part of the Eldon Square West Development. The latest phase will launch St Georges’ Way in Spring 2008, this new mall will improve connectivity from the bus station to the centre which will incorporate a new Argos and 15 new shops.

Old Eldon Square was designed and built by Thomas Oliver and John Dobson between 1825 and 1831, originally as a private garden.

By 1915 the square had been opened to the public, with park benches, lawns and flower beds, which were removed during the development of the Eldon Square shopping centre in the 1970s.

The war memorial, designed by Charles Hartwell, was erected after the First World War. Legend has it that everyone in Newcastle paid a shilling to pay for construction.

The square remains the focal point for the city’s annual remembrance activities.

Tom Robertson, former Royal Marine and Chair of Newcastle’s Ex-Servicemen’s Association, said:

“From a veteran’s perspective this is a very good thing and we’re absolutely behind these plans – we’re looking forward to having more space to show our respects.

“We think this will be a vast improvement to Old Eldon Square – the plans look very good indeed.”

Mike Cookson, Executive Member for Regeneration, Planning and Transport for Newcastle City Council, said:

“The current £170m redevelopment of Eldon Square is not only a fantastic opportunity to bring major economic benefits and massive employment opportunities to Newcastle – it also gives us a wonderful opportunity to transform Old Eldon Square.

“Old Eldon Square is not just a popular meeting place, it’s a unique part of Newcastle’s heritage, and we want to preserve and enhance that for future generations.”

**ENDS**