

Emmett Place

Enhancement

DESIGN STATEMENT

October 2024

EMMETT PLACE



Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council

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Key Dates

Plans and Particulars of the proposed development, including an Appropriate Assessment screening report and an Environmental Impact Assessment screening report are available to view by visiting <https://consult.corkcity.ie/en>

Alternatively, the Plans & Particulars will be available for inspection or purchase on working days from **Friday the 25th Oct to Tuesday the 10th January 2025** at Reception Desk, Cork City Council, City Hall, Cork.

Submissions and observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development is situated, may be made in writing to:-

Senior Engineer, Infrastructure Development, City Hall, Cork.

It should be clearly marked “Emmett Place Enhancement Project”

Or Electronically at <https://consult.corkcity.ie/en>

Closing date for all submissions is on **Tuesday the 10th January 2025 at 4pm.**



View of Emmett Place from Lavitt's Quay

The primary purpose of this zone is to promote the continued economic, civic, cultural and residential growth of the City Centre, and to create a thriving urban community. Primary uses in this zone include but are not limited to uses that contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of the City Centre.

While the overall proposal will be minimal in nature of its function it will formalise a pedestrian space that can accommodate an array of future use/events contributing to the overall viability of urban space in the city centre.

Development proposals in this zone must demonstrate how the proposal would respect, reflect or contribute to the character and vibrancy of the City Centre, commensurate with the nature and scale of the development. Developments must deliver a quality urban environment and public realm with a focus on accessibility and permeability.

Central to the proposed enhancement is legible access which will be formalised for non-motorised users. The result will be a dedicated pedestrianised space improving accessibility and permeability. Furthermore, the overall character of the space will be enhance to a reduction in street clutter enhancing the impact of the existing built form that create a positive sense of enclosure to the space.

In conjunction with the above objectives there are a number of objectives relating to key growth areas including the City Centre including;

Objective 10.1 To strengthen and build upon the potential of Cork City Centre as the vibrant heart of the City and region and as a great place to live, work, recreate and visit.

The responsive enhancement of the space will seek to contribute to existing quality of the space and create opportunities for increased dwell time.



Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040

CMATS specifically recognises that public realm will need to adapt in many cases to support a growing population and a wider range of all ages, abilities and needs. This will be achieved by:

- Incorporating more active travel and incidental exercise into our transport system through the reshaping of our public realm and transport choices;
- Enhancement of public realm through traffic management and transport interventions; and
- Supporting a high quality and fully accessible environment for all abilities and ages by continuing to develop a safe, legible and attractive public realm.
- The enhancement of Emmet Place will contribute to achieving this goal.



City Centre Revitalisation Action Plan

There are a number of actions identified which the proposed enhancement of Emmett Place can contribute to;

- Improve the attractiveness of the city to families by adding playgrounds and other child-friendly spaces to the city centre
- Audit the availability of temporary and permanent exhibition and performance spaces, consider potential uses for these and establish a cultural tour across permanent spaces. Work with property owners to create a schedule of spaces suitable for use as rehearsal space, space for architect students to design and exhibit projects, creative communities
- Promotion and enhancement of the riverside as an attractive place to walk along and socialise can help unlock the River Lee’s potential, improving amenity and the character of the city centre
- implement masterplans and public realm improvements to maximise footfall in city centre
- Explore further pedestrianisation of city centre streets having regard to the very successful pedestrianisation of streets undertaken in the city centre recently
- Identify key hinge points of footfall in the city centre to prioritise public realm improvements. Build on successes of outdoor dining by creating new plazas.



The City Centre Movement Strategy (CCMS)

The CCMS was developed to ensure a more appropriate balance between the different transport modes serving the city through the reallocation of road space to other users on the city centre streets. The strategy aims to improve the environment for public transport users, pedestrians and cyclist through the management of traffic within the central city streets.

Climate Action Plan



The Cork City Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 aims to make Cork climate-neutral by 2030. The plan includes 129 actions across five key areas: governance, communities, built environment, transport, and natural resources.

It targets reducing greenhouse gas emissions by promoting renewable energy, sustainable transport, retrofitting buildings, and enhancing green spaces, all while engaging communities and businesses for a fair transition.

Emmett Place’s enhancement will contribute to a number of actions;

3.15 Complete the rollout of energy efficient LED lanterns for the remaining 49% of public lighting stock, while ensuring the lumen levels and spectral range are maintained or reduced/controlled to avoid effects to biodiversity.

It is proposed to retain the public lighting in situ but retrofit these poles with LED lanterns, contributing to improving the energy efficiency of the network.

4.5 Complete design, plan and implement active travel infrastructure per the CMATS, Cork Cycling Network Plan, Pedestrian Network Plan, Cycle Connects and the National Cycle Network, inclusive of appropriate supportive elements such as wayfinding, benches, water fountains. Promote the need to have active-travel development carried out in a manner that has due regard to environmental sensitivities such as local human receptors, Biodiversity, European sites, water quality and hydrology, existing traffic and transport conditions and amenity value.

Emmett place has a significant amenity value and the enhancement aims to contribute to its development as a safe and inclusive pedestrianised plaza and improved active travel facilities.

4.13 Increase frequency of pedestrianisation periods for the city centre, and pilot in suburban areas and urban towns. Design and deliver such schemes in accordance with relevant good practice guidelines. Analyse and publish results.

The proposed traffic alterations will result in a pedestrianised space within the city centre.

4.15 Ensure all new developments prioritise walking and cycling integration with the surrounding land uses to minimise travel distances by foot/bike.

The proposal prioritises walking and cycling integration through legible access and supporting facilities such as seating and bike racks.

Project Objectives



Enhancement of the existing public realm at Emmet Place through 'placemaking' to improve the comfort and liveability of the urban quarter, increase accessibility and create a sociable environment which will lead to the sustainable economic growth of businesses in the area.



Integration with the granted planning grant for the Crawford Art Gallery (reference no. 2241598) including the relocation of their main public access to the eastern side of their property, the new public realm within their premises and the allowance for emergency and occasional articulated vehicle delivery to their vehicular access at their north-eastern entrance.



Provide designated space and services at Emmet Place for families to enjoy and for seasonal markets, stages and other public events to create a community space.



The existing public realm should be retained where possible so as to utilise the existing high-quality paving with the improvements and enhancements being additions to the existing.



Reallocation of the road space to public realm and the framework for flexible outdoor gathering and dining space following the pedestrianisation of Emmet Place to through traffic.



Optimisation of the existing road space, loading bays, on-street parking, cycling facilities and footpaths to improve the safety and use of the streets.



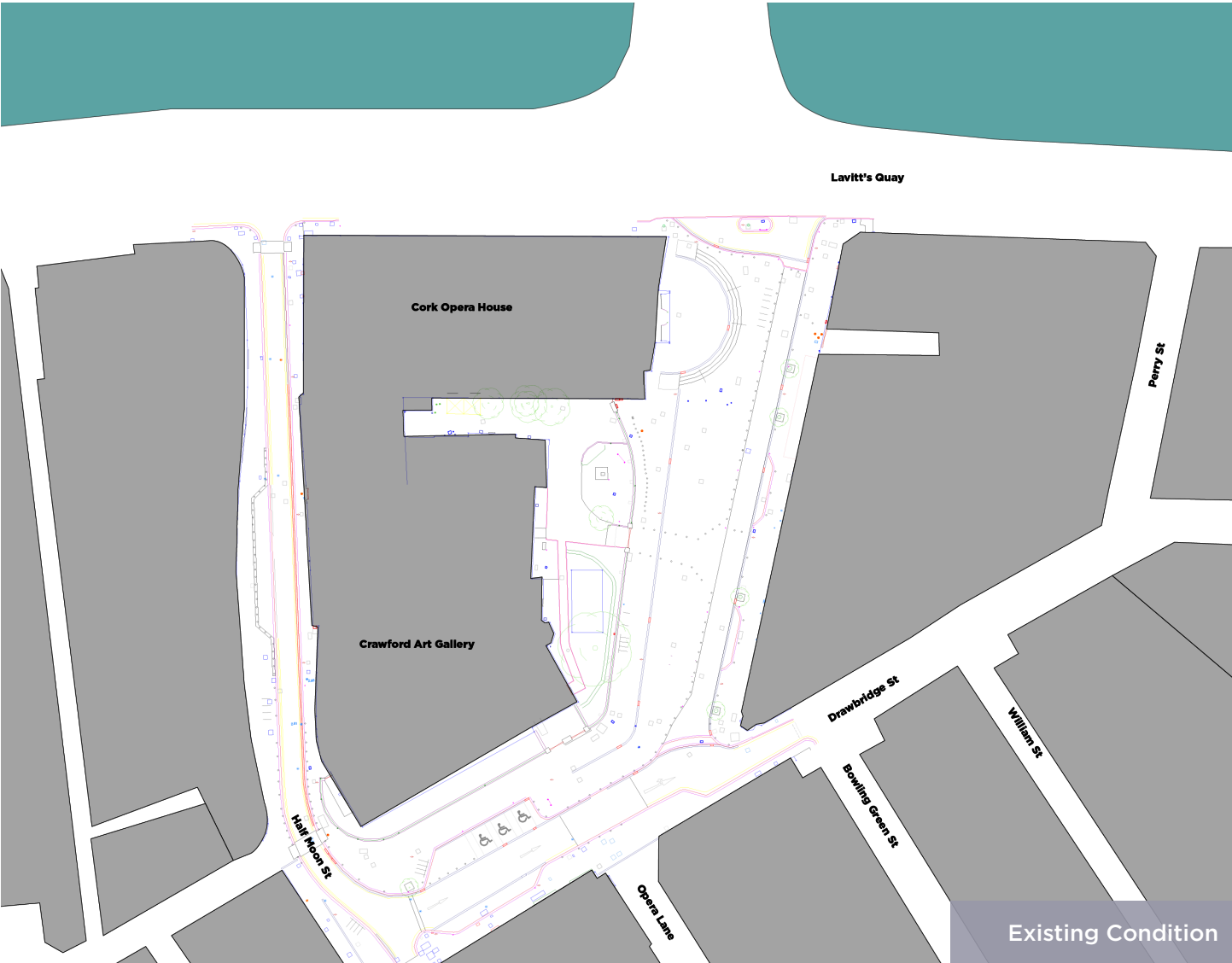
Improvements of the adjoining interfaces to the space to integrate the improvements within the context of the urban quarter.

Existing Condition

Function

Currently, Emmett Place is a mixed-use area with vehicle access, including multiple loading bays, and pedestrian space. It also provides access to nearby commercial and cultural institutions, including Crawford Art Gallery and the Opera House. The space currently operates with reduced vehicle access, encouraging pedestrian movement, but lacks the infrastructure and aesthetic to fully embrace its potential as a flexible civic space.

Emmett Place is a civic open space within the city centre. It is over 2,000m² in area with the critical dimensions being 25m x 85m for the central area from Lavitts Quay to the existing carriageway.



Servicing

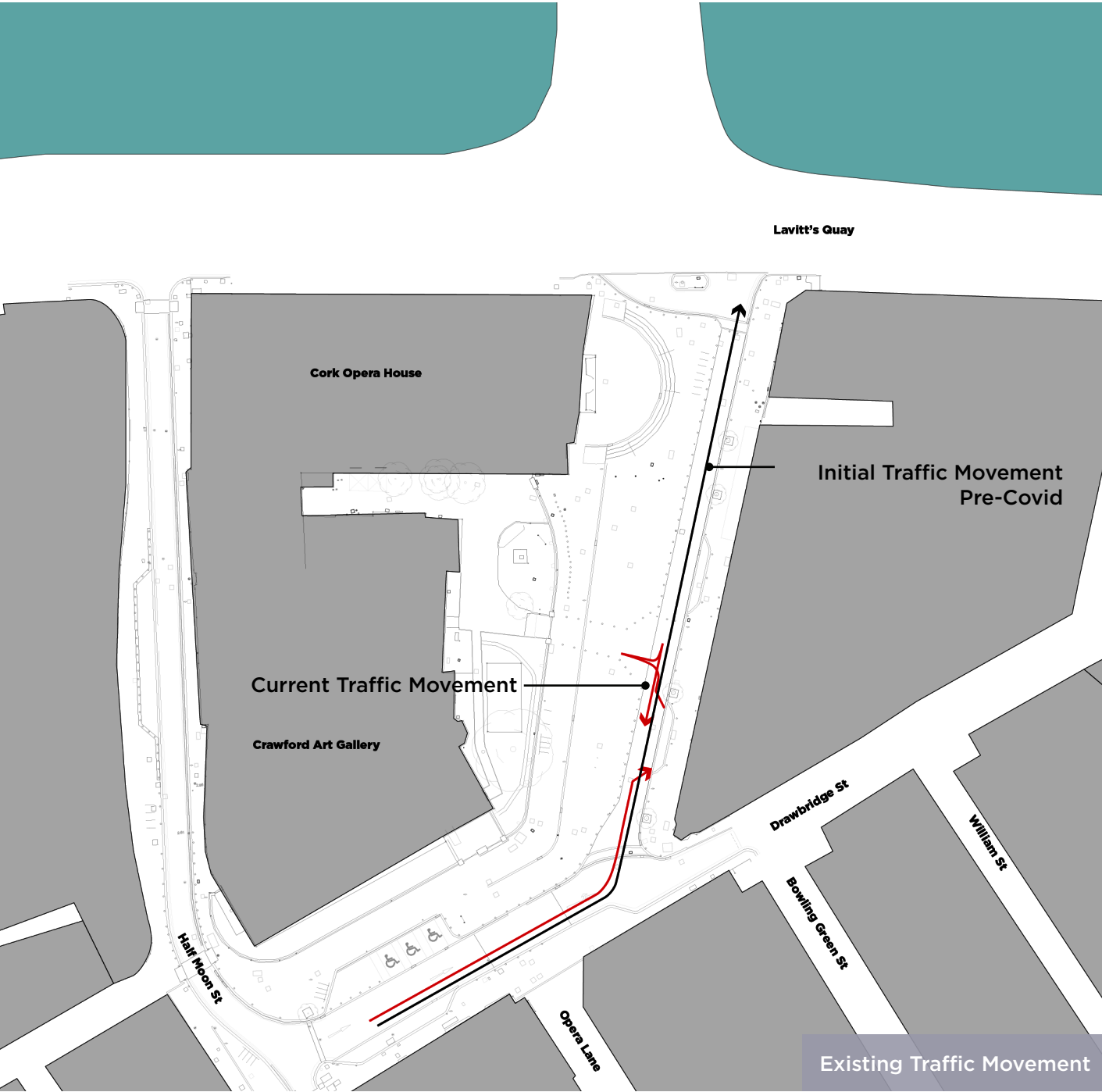
Within the site envelope there are three loading bays, on Lavitt's Quay and two on Emmet Place (south and east). Each vary in length, and all operate from 7:30 until 18:30. Furthermore, there are two set down spaces on Lavitt's Quay. There are also three disable parking spaces to the south of the Crawford Gallery. There is a dedicated parking space for motorbikes adjoining the disabled parking spaces that is level with the carriageway and delineated with bollards.



There are 17 bike racks accommodating parking for 34 number of bicycles. While all are stainless steel there are three variety of fixtures.

Traffic

The current function of the area has evolved due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced through traffic and turned the street into a cul-de-sac. With pre-pandemic conditions seeing through traffic and multiple loading bays, the area currently hosts minimal vehicle access and prioritises pedestrian use.



Through traffic is currently prohibited on northern section of Emmett Place to Lavitt's Quay. There are two bollards in the carriageway which has been in place for a number of years. Since these restrictions were implemented, traffic has reduced, but the space remains underutilized.

Materials

Works undertaken in 2000 set out a robust hardscape of natural stone across the plaza space. The predominant unit is large format pavers with limestone channel units and textured stone setts.

There are 12 light columns on Emmett place which include two luminaries on each pole. It is possible these poles demarcate the historical threshold between the footpath and carriageway along the street. The columns are unique to this space contributing to the overall character of the receiving environment.

Furthermore, there are a number of stainless bike racks, as mentioned above, which include 3 different styles at three locations across the space. It is envisaged to retain the number and relocate them to the edge of the space to reduce the sense of clutter. Furthermore, there is a TFI bike station to the edge of the plaza in front of the railing to the Crawford Gallery. These are earmarked for relocation by the permitted development and a suitable alternative is suggested within the proposal. It is intended to retain the provision of 20No stands in line with the existing number.



Design Approach



The design aims to transform Emmett Place into a pedestrian-friendly, flexible civic plaza that aligns with the city’s broader urban greening and climate resilience goals.

This people-centric approach prioritizes accessibility, formalises pedestrianization, and introduces urban greening through the integration of trees, planters, and flexible seating.

By enhancing the existing conditions, the design retains and expands the use of the space for public events, gatherings, and leisure, all while minimising the change to necessary loading bay access and accommodating occasional vehicle needs.

Approach

Enhance the existing

The proposal recognises the robust works that were previously undertaken to Emmett Place. The overall framework of the public realm will be retained. The paved carriageway will be retained and reused as part of the overall pedestrian space.

Natural stone paving will largely be retained; save for spot locations where damage have been done or where street furniture proposed for removal impacts paving i.e. the stone bollards.

The ornamental lighting, while not of heritage significance, contributes to the character of the plaza. It is intended to regenerate the poles to enhance the nighttime atmosphere, improve ongoing energy consumptions and formalise the supporting structures for banners advertising the various programme of events that take place in and around the plaza.



Formalise pedestrianisation

There will be no traffic in Emmett Place aside from controlled service access. A continuous desire line for pedestrians moving along the quayside will be provided through a pavement build out. Relocation of the existing loading bay adjacent to Costa to the edge of the new pedestrianised space and widened set down space on Lavitt’s Quay will offset the current provision.

It is proposed to reduce pedestrian crossings points on Lavitt’s Quay and reduce road width to 4m to shorten pedestrian crossing to Opera Lane which will contribute to increase pedestrian safety.

Urban greening

Part of the enhancement of the space will include the introduction of permanent soft landscape spaces. Low maintenance herbaceous planting will complement the proposed Crawford Gallery Garden proposed. There are a number of new trees are proposed to reinforce existing line of trees to eastern side of plaza. This will soften the overall space, create a sense of enclosure and provide a layered landscape approach to the plaza. The overall effect will seek to draw people into the space.



People centric approach

Concurrent to the above attributes of urban greening, the cluster of planting and proposed screen to the north edge of the plaza will function to improve the microclimate of the space. This intervention will partially screen views in and out of the space while also performing as a wind break. This buffer will form a sense of enclosure and reduce localised wind coming into the space from the quayside.

It is hoped that the restrictions on vehicle movement will result in greater footfall and longer dwell time for people using the space. Provision of public seating befitting of a civic plaza to animate the public realm. Removable street furniture will be included for within the seat to complement the space. The public realm will include playful elements within the implementation to further animate the space. Improved controlled crossing points at Lavitt’s Quay will shorten crossing times and direct people into the space. Furthermore the design will ensure an enhancement in relation to universal access while maintaining disabled spaces within the scheme.

Flexible civic space

The removal of vehicle access and a reduction of clutter will enhance the capacity of the space to continue to hold events. Resulting in a larger flexible space to cater for a variety of everyday and seasonal uses. There is a rich programme of events held in the space it is hoped that the proposal will enhance the offer for further events to take place in Emmett Place.



Materials

The material palette has been carefully selected to reflect both the aesthetic and functional needs of the space. The proposal includes the overall retention of the durable, high-quality paving materials set out over 20 years ago.

Raised planters and seating elements not only introduce greenery but also serve as acoustic and visual natural barriers, defining the space and enhancing safety. The selection of trees and plant species has been made with consideration for climate resilience, ensuring the landscape thrives in urban conditions and contributes to Cork’s environmental goals.

The plaza will feature subtle interventions to address calls for the public realm to be become playful. This is an integral component of improving the placemaking quality of Emmet Place. It is also considered these could be both temporary and permanent.

Hardscape

It is intended to retain the majority of the hardscape within the scheme. Areas such as the set down space to the north where there are a number of rough cut setts will be reused elsewhere in the scheme and larger units will seek to be replace where pavers need to be cut out.

Softscape

A continuous stand of trees will form a high canopy within the plaza. This will perform as a windbreak and provide a sense of enclosure. The trees will be supplemented by a rich understory of grasses and ferns.

It is anticipated that trees will be clear stemmed to 1.5m in raised planters and 2m in hardstanding. Tress in hardstanding will be set out in conjunction with the European Tree Planting standard ensuring there is sufficient volume and quality of soil below grade for the trees to thrive.



Raised Planter with Screen



Seating



Suite of planter and seating



Proposed seating finish

Bike Parking



**Electric Power Bollard
Bins
Water Fountain**

Lighting columns



Typical view of raised planter and seating