

Joint Report of the Cabinet Member for City Strategy
and Communities & Neighbourhoods

Reinvigorate York

Summary

1. This report describes the current proposals to create a clear way forward for reinvigorating the centre of our city. It sets out the current status of the City Centre Area Action Plan, Public Space Strategy, Central Historic Core Character Appraisal, Movement & Accessibility Framework, and Footstreets Review, and identifies recent and current projects which are already contributing to the improvement of the city centre environment and accessibility.
2. The report concludes that we need a defined City Centre Design Group of CYC Officers who will develop a protocol for new design and who will, with reference to the protocol, oversee all new design and maintenance decisions in the city centre in order to ensure consistency and build awareness of the wider picture.
3. Seven key proposals are set out to be completed over the next few years, in addition to recent and ongoing initiatives such as Library Square public space enhancement and de-cluttering of signage, fencing, bollards and other items of street furniture throughout the city centre.
4. The 7 key projects will provide the impetus for more improvement in the city centre, more de-cluttering and greater design consistency, and will help to establish a clear line of decision-making within the Council.
5. Completion of the improvements will showcase the clear directive and design talents of the City Centre Design Group and give confidence to investors, businesses and residents.

Recommendation

6. The Cabinet Member is requested to note the progress on the Reinvigorate York Initiative and approve the setting up of a City Centre Design Group in order to produce a protocol for new design in the city centre. With reference to the design protocol, the Group will oversee all new design and maintenance decisions in the city centre in terms of strategy, specific detail, and coordination.

Reason: In order to produce a protocol for new design to reinvigorate the city centre.

Background

City Centre Area Action Plan 2012

7. The Issues & Options report has been through public consultation and reported to members. The Plan set out opportunities for improvement in the centre by area (Castle Piccadilly, Cultural Quarter, Gateway Streets, City Spaces, Riversides). For each of these areas poor cityscape was identified and described, and opportunities for improvement discussed.
8. The new Major Development Projects & Initiatives team (MDPI) are now progressing the plan through to a Preferred Options draft which will be reported to LDFWG in March 2012 before public consultation in May/ June and submission to the Secretary of State early in 2013. It will then become adopted policy as part of the wider Local Development Framework (LDF).
9. As well as the context and opportunities for improvements in the city centre, the Plan refers to the New City Beautiful work carried out by Professor Simpson last year, and supports many of the ideas set out in that economic vision for the city.
10. A number of projects have been completed and others are expected to begin later this year/ next year, as set out in Annex 1 to this report.

York Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal 2011

11. This is a key document which will inform the final City Centre AAP. The priority public space improvements highlighted in the study are:

- The Minster Precinct, including Duncombe Place & Dean's Park;
 - Parliament Street, St Sampson's Square, Newgate Market and Piccadilly;
 - Exhibition Square;
 - Station Approach and Memorial Gardens;
 - The Castle.
12. Some of these potential projects accord with the 7 key projects set out above but there does need to be further discussion on these forerunners through the Reinvigorate Steering Group.
13. Other public space improvements highlighted in the Historic Core Character Appraisal - and also detailed in the City Centre Area Action Plan (Issues & Options) - include:
- King's Square - an important space between Shambles and Low Petergate should be enhanced with higher quality hard landscaping and street furniture;
 - Bootham Park Hospital - the southern perimeter of the grounds should be better managed to enhance views of John Carr's building;
 - St Maurice's churchyard, Monkgate - this under-used space should be re-designed to improve its appearance and functionality; and
 - Whip-Ma-Whop-Ma-Gate - a cluttered space which should be simplified and re-designed to maximise functional use.
14. The appraisal has now been consulted upon and is expected to be approved at Planning Committee on the 24th of November.
15. The Central Historic Core Study also promotes a way-finding strategy for the city centre which, through some initial soundings of disability groups and other residents, would be very welcome. The York Access Forum and the recently formed York Independent Living Network would need to be part of our key stakeholder group. Way-finding will help to highlight less used areas of the city, such as Micklegate and Walmgate, in order to help business and regeneration.

York City Centre Movement & Accessibility Framework 2011

16. This supports the City Centre Area Action Plan, and identifies actions to address the impact of traffic and highway infrastructure

on quality of place – to help improve the quality of the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and boost the local economy.

17. The Framework takes into account the way the City Centre will change in shape and size over the next 20 years with significant new development coming forward, and considers the deliverability of the York New City Beautiful report, focusing on the walls, rivers, streets and spaces.
18. The report will be consulted on as part of the preferred options stage of the City Centre Area Action Plan referred to earlier. Work to understand the implications and flesh out how proposals could be implemented will also be progressed.
19. Key principles of the Framework are:
 - Pedestrian priority in the ‘heart of the city’;
 - Removal of through traffic from the ‘heart’ with managed access provided for essential traffic on priority routes - maximising access via bus, walking and cycling;
 - The 4 functional areas to become Traffic Cells allowing general traffic into different parts of the City Centre;
 - Intercept car trips at a ring of parking at the edge of City (Park and Ride) and the edge of City Centre;
 - Make the whole of the City Centre a 20mph zone and a Low Emission Zone in the historic core;
 - Reduce the number of car parking spaces
 - Expand the pedestrianised Footstreets to embody the ‘heart’ and extend operating hours;
 - Remove all traffic from the Footstreets during operational hours;
 - Enhance cross-city centre cycle routes.

Seven Key Place Making Projects 2011-2013

20. In order to raise profile and demonstrate early success it is proposed to aim at taking 7 key projects go ahead in the first 3 years. These are:-
 - (1) Station approach to Minster – improvement of route and spaces;
 - (2) Duncombe Place/ Minster Piazza public space enhancement;
 - (3) King’s Square public space enhancement;

- (4) Piccadilly/ Pavement junction improvements and Parliament Street public space enhancement;
- (5) City property on Hungate;
- (6) Tower Gardens; and
- (7) Creation and improvement of parks, gardens and trees.

21. Delivery of these projects will give impetus to the Reinvigorate York programme and confidence to continue with improvements to the streets, spaces and places in the city centre.
22. A next phase of short-term projects, meanwhile, can link to the early improvements (and those previously carried out such as Library Square public space enhancement, Museum Street junction de-cluttering, and guard rail removal).
23. The first phase of planting 50,000 trees over 3 years, as proposed through the New City Beautiful vision, was launched in November this year through a partnership between CYC and various environmental groups in the city, under the banner 'Treemendous York'.

Public Space Strategy

24. A project initiation document has been produced (July 2011), and a draft brief will be completed in December. The brief will set out a strategy for the whole of York that will contain a set of guiding principles relating to enhancement, repair and management of roads, pavements, cycle tracks and public spaces.
25. It will also develop guidelines for paving, street furniture, lighting and other aspects of the use of our public spaces. It will look in detail at the historic core and take forward recommendations in the York Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal as well as help deliver York's Economic Vision. It will also look at accessibility issues and propose way-finding solutions for the city.
26. The strategy is laid out in 4 sections: introduction, understanding, analysis, priorities & actions, with the overall programme agreed as follows :-

□ Project initiation document	July 2011
□ Background research	September 2011
□ Survey	September 2011
□ Priorities and actions	October 2011

- Consultation draft
- Final document

November 2011
December 2011

27. The Public Space Strategy, once adopted, will become an evidence base for the LDF, in the same way as the City Centre Area Action Plan, Historic Core Character Appraisal, Access & Movement Strategy, Footstreets Review, and New City Beautiful Economic Vision. Together they will provide the background, protocol and reasoning for decisions on new design as well as removal of clutter in the city centre.

Footstreets Review

28. A report commissioned by the City Council in 2010 recommended the following measures should be investigated in the footstreets area, with a view to implementing some short term changes as part of a longer term strategy of improvements :-

- standardise the hours of operation;
- extend the hours of operation;
- bring Fossgate into the footstreets zone;
- allow cycling through the footstreets in some places;
- amend the exemption that allows some drivers with mobility difficulties to drive into the pedestrian zone.

29. Proposals to take these initiatives forward are covered in a separate paper for the cabinet member for City Strategy.

30. A number of other measures have since been considered, with the change in administration, which are aimed at achieving further improvements in the city centre :-

- implement a transshipment system to reduce the size and weight of vehicles in order to reduce the physical intrusion of vehicles, damage to highway surfaces, and improve air quality;
- introduce an advisory 10mph speed limit;
- note current improvement plans for Duncombe Place and consider the short term option of closing off the slip road from Duncombe Place to Blake Street;.
- Consider alterations to the existing one way system and banned turns;
- extension of the footstreets area to include Goodramgate, Deangate and the College Street area;

- introduce pay and display parking provision in the central area;
- change the current traffic management arrangements in Micklegate;
- review and manage “A” boards in the central area.

Consultation

31. There will be opportunities for local consultation events (place-shaping) in order to assess the good and bad aspects of public spaces, together with statutory consultation on traffic orders and planning applications.

Proposal 1- City Centre Design Manual

32. With these key evidence bases as a reference point, it is suggested that a Design Manual could be developed by Christmas 2011 in order to provide a clear reference point for design, and a new City Centre Design Group could then begin to oversee the implementation of proposals based on this reference guide.
33. A draft of the design manual can be reported to the cabinet decision session in December. It would be structured in order to describe the historical context and overall objectives/ vision. It would include a comprehensive list of cross departmental guidelines on hard and soft surfaces and street furniture, and give guidance on management and maintenance. This section would also outline opportunities for community involvement and set out priorities and phasing proposals.
34. A potential list of items to be considered within the design manual is set out in Annex 2 of this report. As well as those features like bins, seating and bollards under the general heading of ‘street furniture’, hard ground surfaces (natural stone paving, manmade paving, tarmac) would also be included, together with soft surfaces (roadside verges, open green spaces, trees, planting and planters, water features).

Proposal 2 - City Centre Design Group

35. The group should comprise key staff from City Strategy and Communities & Neighbourhood Services directorates in order to ensure that all works affecting city centre public spaces and streets are better coordinated, managed and reviewed.

36. The group should meet on a monthly basis in order to discuss opportunities and agree priorities for funding, and then to agree management and delivery protocols.

Proposal 3 - Working across Directorates

37. Effective multi-disciplinary working is essential if the objectives of the Reinvigorate York initiative are to be realised. The Design Group should have agreed representation from the following Officer teams:-

- Major Development Projects & Initiatives
- Design, Conservation & Sustainable Development
- Development Management
- Highways Network Management
- Highways Maintenance
- City Centre Management
- Neighbourhood Pride
- Heritage and Culture

38. It is especially important that improved communication and coordination between the planning/ management and maintenance aspects of the Council are achieved as soon as possible.

Options

39. **Option 1** - It is recommended that all three proposals above be approved for future working. Other options based around current working practices would continue to deliver projects on the ground but, it is considered, would not provide the coordination and detail required to deliver consistently.

Option 2 – Members reject the above proposals; an

Option 3 – Members agree an amended set of proposals.

Implications

Financial

40. At this stage there is no certainty over funding, and some proposals might suggest quite significant capital sums. Officers will explore all

opportunities for funding, both inside and outside the Council, and will bring forward options in due course.

Human Resources

41. None.

Equalities

42. Consultation will ensure that issues of equality are addressed.

Legal

43. None at this stage.

Property

44. None at this stage.

Risk Management

45. To be undertaken as individual projects are identified.

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Annexes

Annex 1 – Recent and imminent Reinvigorate York projects.

Annex 2 – Street furniture A-Z

Background papers - None