



Report of the Director of City Development

Executive Board

Date: 11th September 2007

Subject: Proposed Refurbishment of City Centre Public Realm

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

1 Purpose Of Report

- 1.1 To advise Members of the need for major investment in city centre pedestrian area and adjacent streets and to propose a co-ordinated strategy of refurbishment and maintenance.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This paper looks at the important role which the city centre plays in the economy of Leeds and the wider region and the importance of securing a high quality public realm to underpin this role (Sections 4 & 5). It notes concern about the current condition of the city centre pedestrian area and adjacent streets and the need for continued investment in the public realm (Section 6). It proposes a rolling programme of capital investment (Section 7) and proposes that this investment should be protected with increased cleansing, maintenance and security.
- 2.2 The Eastgate development, which is due to be completed by late 2012, comprises 1.5m sq. ft of new retail, office, leisure, residential and car parking set in new streets and public spaces. This public realm will be designed, implemented and maintained to a high standard and it will be important to ensure that there is both a seamless boundary with the publicly maintained streets and spaces that border the Eastgate development and that there is a high quality public realm throughout, so that the whole of the city centre remains attractive to shoppers, visitors, investors, developers and businesses.

- 2.3 Members are asked to:
- i) note the contents of this report;
 - ii) agree to the principle of a co-ordinated programme of improvements and maintenance for street and public space refurbishment in the city centre pedestrian area as indicated in this report;
 - iii) request officers to work up a detailed costed programme of works, and progress funding proposals in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules
 - iv) request officers to ascertain the costs and possible sources of funding of an enhanced maintenance and cleansing regime and an increased city centre patrol of uniformed Liaison Officers.

3.0 Introduction

- 3.1 The city centre is one of the most successful in the country and is the key economic driver for both Leeds and the region as a whole. It is a thriving retail, employment, business, administrative, residential, education and cultural centre for the region and is becoming increasingly important as a tourist centre earning national renown for its shopping and nightlife. The city centre's qualities are also important in terms of the image and marketing of the city as a whole and as a means to securing wider benefits to the most disadvantaged parts of the city.

4. The City Centre and Its Regional Role

- 4.1 The city centre has over 1000 shops, supporting a shopping catchment population of around 3.2m. More than £1.2bn is spent annually on retail alone in the city centre; 49% of residents visit Leeds once a week or more and 33% visit 1-3 times a month, primarily for shopping. 68% of visitors (i.e. non Leeds residents) come to Leeds for shopping, with 59% visiting at least one to three times a week.
- 4.2 The city centre is the major regional employment centre. Over 124,000 people are employed in the city centre, accounting for almost one third of jobs in Leeds MD. Between 1998 and 2004 employment in the city centre grew by 16% and by 6.1% between 2003 and 2004. Projections for future employment growth suggest the city centre will make a significant contribution to additional jobs over the next ten years for both the city and the region as a whole. This is mainly due to the city centre's strength in financial and professional services and other service industries.
- 4.3 Tourism is now a major contributor to the local economy each year and is focussed on the city centre, based on retail and on business tourism. The growth of important cultural activities continues in the city centre with development of The Carriageworks, new facilities at Quarry Hill, the refurbished Grand Theatre, Art Gallery, and the new City Museum. Leeds' success as a thriving evening and night time entertainment centre has also been important in enhancing the image of the city in the last ten years.
- 4.4 The last decade has also seen a dramatic increase in the amount of residential development in the city centre and the number of people living there. The residential population has risen from 4,300 in 1999 to an estimated 10,000 today. This will rise to over 13,000 when all schemes under construction are completed and to approximately 27,000 if all planned schemes are completed. These figures allow for a proportion of vacant units, company lets and second homes.

- 4.5 Over the last 10 years, almost £1.5bn of major property development schemes have been undertaken in the city centre. In addition £1.2bn of schemes are currently under construction and a further £2.4bn are proposed, altogether representing 69% of total development in Leeds MD.
- 4.6 The city centre thus benefits the rest of the city and the region as a whole, in terms of the jobs, investment, amenities and facilities which it provides. The image, attractions and environment of the city centre are important in terms of attracting investors, employers, employees, residents, shoppers, visitors and tourists to the city. Initiatives such as Construction Leeds and other job guarantee programmes help ensure benefits such as new jobs can be targeted at the most deprived communities, whilst city centre events, including community events are targeted at the wider city community.

5. The Contribution Of The City Centre Public Realm

- 5.1 The importance of a high quality public realm to the image, attraction and enjoyment of the city centre and as a symbol of confidence in the future, is already acknowledged in a number of strategies for the city, including the Vision for Leeds, Economic Development Strategy, Leeds City Centre Strategic Plan and the Renaissance Leeds vision.
- 5.2 Leeds city centre cannot be seen in isolation and must be considered in a competitive context, particularly in relation to other core cities. The quality of the public realm is fundamental to the city centre's ability to compete successfully with other major cities. Central Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Glasgow and Liverpool have all seen recent major investment in their city centre public realms. Until recently Leeds city centre was consistently ranked as one of the top four retail centres in the country. However its ranking has now slipped to sixth place: Birmingham has overtaken Leeds due to its continued regeneration including its Bullring development.
- 5.3 Within Leeds city centre, improvements to the public realm have already served as a catalyst for private sector investment in surrounding areas. For example, more than £70m has been invested in Briggate by the private sector since its closure to through traffic in 1993. Around City Square there have been three major office schemes totalling £77m development value, in addition to the 187 bed Park Plaza Hotel and redevelopment of the former Post Office.
- 5.4 The proposed investment by the developers of both the Eastgate (1.5m sq. ft) and the Trinity (0.4m sq ft) Quarters will see considerable improvements in the public realm around those developments. This will invite comparisons with the quality of the public realm in the core city centre pedestrian area and further highlight the need to make improvements.

6. Current Condition of Pedestrian Area

- 6.1 The Landmark pedestrianisation scheme covers Commercial Street, Albion Place, Central Square, Bond Street and mid Albion Street (between Commercial Street and Short Street). Implemented in 1991 and 1992, the scheme followed a high profile, bold modern design using innovative materials aimed at improving the quality of the city centre public realm, reinforcing public and business confidence, and sending out a positive message about the city centre. The scheme radically refurbished the above

streets, introducing new lighting, street furniture, gateway structures and an events space.

- 6.2 However, a report to Executive Board in 2004 highlighted a number of issues arising from the design and construction of Landmark Leeds. Highway Maintenance is facing problems in terms of cost, availability of replacement materials and the ability to undertake satisfactory repairs quickly.
- 6.3 As well as placing a growing maintenance burden on the City Council, there are other significant issues for a location within the heart of one of the country's leading retail centres, which need to be considered:
- a potentially unsafe streetscene, as evidenced by ongoing accident claims against the City Council, although these will be declining in line with the rest of the city as streets are temporarily repaired. Currently the Landmark area alone generates an average of ten claims per annum, accounting for £161,000, not including claims handling and social costs;
 - a visually deteriorating physical environment as minor subsidence takes place, levels are increasingly difficult to match and patches of black top repairs are undertaken due to lack of availability of replacement materials;
 - areas of poor lighting during hours of darkness leading to problems of perceptions of safety;
 - a generally tired and dated appearance to the area.
- 6.4 The 'Landmark Scheme' report to Executive Board in February 2004 suggested that a phased replacement of Landmark was required over the next few years. This has begun: Briggate and King Edward Street have been completely refurbished to a high standard with funding from Yorkshire Forward. The scheme is well regarded by retailers, other businesses and users.
- 6.5 Mid Albion Street (between Commercial Street and Short Street) is currently being refurbished with financial support from Yorkshire Forward, on the understanding that developers and/or the Council refurbishes Lower Albion Street. Although Yorkshire Forward may be willing to part fund further works they are increasingly expecting contributions from both the Council and the private sector.

7 Capital Refurbishment Programme

- 7.1 Briggate and King Edward Street have set the standard for the rest of the retail quarter. The design principles established for these streets are now being applied to Mid Albion Street and it is proposed that these principles should be applied to the refurbishment of the pedestrian area, subject to funding being identified. The Council has made provision for £5m of expenditure in the current Capital Programme. The aspiration will be to progress with Phase 1, consisting of Lower Albion Street, Albion Place and Central Square, utilising this budget and other contributions. It is envisaged that the same design principles will also be applied to Commercial Street, Lands Lane, Dortmund Square, Bond Street, Kirkgate and Central Road and Fish Street in the longer term, but it is acknowledged that these additional works can only be brought forward as additional capital resources are identified. This wall to wall refurbishment style will provide an integrated, co-ordinated central core to the pedestrian area.

- 7.2 However, as both the Headrow and Boar Lane have a higher profile and are more strategic in connecting the retail area to the rest of the city centre, consideration should be given to a more radical approach for these streets, possibly incorporating public art or iconic gateways to draw people into the retail area. There will also be the opportunity to make spaces such as Dortmund Square and Central Square more memorable and usable.
- 7.3 Initial estimates for repaving and removing Landmark structures have been drawn up. The programme and costs are based upon an indicative proposal and will need to be developed further, subject to funding approval, to confirm the scope of the design on which costs are based. In addition further funding would be required to redesign Boar Lane and the Headrow and develop public art and gateways into the retail quarter. It is proposed that initial funding comes from the capital programme and that negotiations are then held with Yorkshire Forward, developers and property owners to lever in additional funding. The initial funding would enable more detailed design and accurate costings to be made.
- 7.4 A map of the selected streets can be seen on the attached Plan 1. Members are reminded that only Phase 1 works detailed at 7.1 above will be progressed at this stage, although some work on the masterplan for the whole scheme will need to be done early in the timetable. Enabling/design works would be required in 2007 and 2008 to prepare the way for construction works. This would include:
- preliminary design of the whole scheme;
 - detailed design of works to be constructed in 2008;
 - procurement of a Contractor(s) to undertake the works;
 - site clearance works;
 - trial holes to locate services and confirm pavement construction;
 - street lighting works to install new and remove old lighting units.
- By undertaking the site clearance and street lighting works in 2007-08 it would enable the Main Contractor to build the works more efficiently.
- 7.5 The construction period would be from February to the end of October each year so as to avoid the Christmas shopping season. In addition to this a series of constraints, in the form of working zones, would be placed on the Contractor to ensure that the works were undertaken in a controlled fashion and to avoid an entire street being excavated at once. The programme would need to be carefully co-ordinated with other works that will be on-going and action taken to ensure that the city centre did not feel like one construction site.
- 7.6 The exact sequence of works in the later phases will partly depend on the extent and timing of private sector contributions.
- The Headrow, Boar Lane, Central Square, Albion Place and Lower Albion Street are considered to be the top priorities for capital refurbishment schemes in terms of their condition and their general appearance.
 - Dortmund Square, which experiences high footfall, could be transformed into a more effective space through redesign and would be the next priority, if sufficient private sector funding is secured.
 - The condition of Lands Lane, Bond Street, Fish Street, Kirkgate and Central Road would need to be monitored throughout, but it is suggested that the refurbishment of these streets would be lower in priority, in the absence of any third party funding.

8 Protecting Investment through Maintenance, Cleansing and Safety

- 8.1 Refurbishing the public realm will be critical in maintaining the vibrancy of the city centre and in ensuring that retail does not shift to new developments away from the existing retail core but rather expands into them, resulting in an improved retail offer overall. Just as important, however, will be how the Council protects that investment through enhanced maintenance of streets, trees etc and cleansing. Otherwise there could be a 'tide mark' wherever the privately and publicly maintained public realm meets, such as on the Headrow/Eastgate at the top of Briggate. This is because the private sector is likely to adopt the methods used by, for example, Westminster City Council which has treated all their Yorkstone on main thoroughfares with a gum resistant surface. The streets are washed daily and a team of people patrol the streets each day manually scraping off the chewing gum. At present Environmental Services simply do not have the resources to undertake such intensive cleansing.
- 8.2 Other cities which have invested heavily in their public realms have not only increased maintenance and cleansing regimes but have also ensured a greater Council presence on the streets. It is recommended therefore that officers investigate the costs and possible sources of funding of an enhanced maintenance and cleansing regime and an increased city centre patrol of uniformed Liaison Officers.
- 8.3 There are other benefits to improving the public realm. The pedestrian footfall in the prime retail areas is enormous compared to many other parts of the city. The 7th Annual City Centre Audit showed total pedestrian flow into and out of the retail quarter to be 1.47 million over the period of one week of counting. Pedestrian flows on Sundays have risen by over 60% since 2000. Due to its high footfall, the City Centre area has always been the cause of a higher number of slipping and tripping claims, in comparison with other lengths of highway. Although claims are probably declining in line with the rest of the city as temporary repairs are undertaken, a renewed public realm should reduce claims further thereby freeing up money for improved maintenance.
- 8.4 The street lighting PFI commenced in 2006 and replacement of the Landmark lighting is included in the PFI project. The lighting replacements will be co-ordinated with the pedestrian area refurbishment and wherever possible lighting columns will be removed and wall mounted lighting used instead. This improved lighting will contribute to pedestrians' feelings of safety. The timing of the maintenance works will be reviewed in conjunction with advancement and funding of capital improvement proposals to ensure that the works are fully co-ordinated and the Council is not incurring costs for very short term benefit.

9. Council Policies

- 9.1 The proposals to continue to upgrade the city centre streets and spaces, accord with a number of key Council policies and strategies described in Section 3 of this report. The proposals will also help secure sustainable economic development by promoting the city centre, enhancing the local environment, and improving access within the centre for all.

10. Resource Implications

- 10.1 An initial sum of £5m has been injected into the capital programme. This will in part enable more detailed cost estimates to be prepared and negotiations held with other

organisations to lever in additional funding. Consideration will need to be given to the required additional level of capital funding needed. Furthermore negotiations will be held with Yorkshire Forward, developers and property owners for potential sources of funding.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Members are asked to

- i) note the contents of this report;
- ii) agree to the principle of a co-ordinated programme of maintenance and improvements for street and public space refurbishment in the city centre pedestrian area as indicated in this report;
- iii) request officers to work up a detailed programme of works, and progress funding proposals in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules;
- iv) request officers to ascertain the costs and possible sources of funding of an enhanced maintenance and cleansing regime and an increased city centre patrol of uniformed Liaison Officers and report back to Executive Board on the outcome of these investigations.

