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Design Brief for the New City Park for Leeds

Introduction

This document outlines the guiding principles and associated design brief for the design of the proposed City Park in Leeds city centre. The City Park will be brought forward in a joint approach between Vastint and Leeds City Council.

The City Park will be situated in South Bank and extend from the River Aire in the west, across Meadow Lane to the former Tetley Brewery site and Crown Point Road to the education quarter and possibly beyond. It will cover an influential amount of land in South Bank and will be comprised of Leeds City Council, Vastint and potentially other landholdings.

Vision and Ambition

Leeds City Council are currently in the process of commissioning 'Our Spaces' Strategy. The document is proposed to be a strategic vision for the creation, delivery and future management of all city centre public realm within the city centre.

Leeds has a vision to create an exemplar, vibrant, **world class** city that is **inclusive**, welcoming and accessible to all. Our spaces play a huge role in enhancing our reputation on a world stage. Through re-thinking the approach to the design of our spaces and exploring opportunities to reduce highway infrastructure at key gateways, we will create enhanced settings for our spaces and generate opportunities for new spaces to develop. Our spaces will be an integral part of the Leeds offer to:

- Create a world class City Centre;
- Position and promote Leeds City Centre as the economic powerhouse of the north and the capital of the City Region through the quality of our spaces;
- Create the look and feel of a 21st century city centre that is complementary to its major cultural and heritage context.

Our Vision: 'Our Spaces' Strategy will embody our vision for the creation of a vibrant, inclusive, world class city centre public realm.

Our Ambition: Is that through 'Our Spaces' Strategy our spaces become the City's greatest cultural asset.

Design Principles

The strategy will seek to create and improve our spaces to form a city centre that **looks as good as it feels** and is to be informed by the following principles:

- *Our spaces will be designed for people – comfortable, stimulating, relaxing and safe*
- *Our spaces will be highly connected, considering pedestrians first, clearly legible and easily navigable*
- *Our spaces will be places for cultural activity, from small interactions to major events*
- *Our spaces will be resilient to climate change, naturally green/trees, cooling the air, sustainably managing surface water and absorbing carbon.*
- *Our spaces will be inclusive - designed to for all ages, abilities and reflect Leeds' multi-ethnic population*
- *Our spaces will celebrate Leeds' built and natural assets, from the edges of the River Aire to the magnificent architecture of the city centre.*
- *Our spaces will be valuable economic infrastructure, that supports businesses and provide a canvas for new investment.*

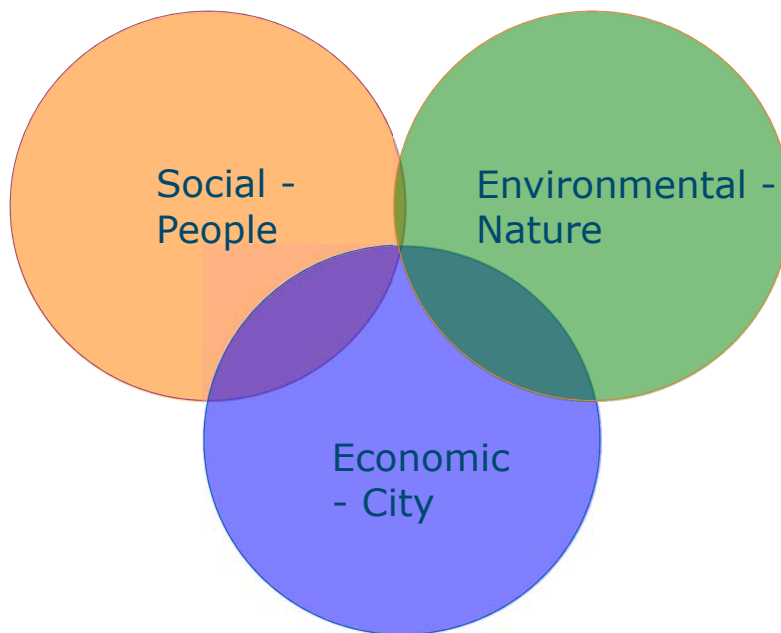
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It is anticipated that through the adoption of a common set of design principles and the Vision and Ambition set out above, Leeds will have a consistent approach to the design and delivery of its spaces, regardless of who is involved.

City Park Design Strategy

The primary focus for the design strategy is determined by the following three drivers:-

1. Economic Sustainability - Provide for the City
2. Social Sustainability - Provide for People
3. Environmental Sustainability - Provide for Nature



Fundamentally how the design strategy drivers create and leave a **Legacy for the City** for future generations will be the ultimate test for the design approach and its success in the future.

The design strategy approach using the headings above, present the opportunity to consider the design drivers under each of these, which need to be considered as part of the design brief, its development and check and challenge as the design develops.

The design drivers to be considered are listed below.

1. City – Economic Sustainability

- ☐ **Business Retention and Attraction** – through the provision of an enhanced working environment
- ☐ **Regeneration** – Attracts investment and spurs rejuvenation of commercial activity enhancing the area's image
- ☐ **Land/Property Values** – A new greenspace will directly add value to land and property in Leeds South Bank

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- **Tourism** – Parks contribute to a city's attractiveness as a tourist destination
- **Events** – A space to hold various event types are invaluable in raising city profile and raising revenue
- **Employment** – Regeneration of the Leeds South Bank including a City Centre Park will create significant job opportunities

2. People – Social Sustainability

- **Community Cohesion** – Create an environment for social interaction, physical activity and quiet contemplation, developing community identity
- **Heritage** – Capture creatively and utilise the heritage of the Leeds South Bank within the park to engender identity
- **Activity** – Provide varied opportunities for activity for all ages, races and abilities
- **Education** – Provide a facility to develop enjoyment and commitment to learning
- **Health** – Parks and greenspaces make a positive contribution to health, reduce stress, provide free, easily accessible recreational opportunities

3. Nature – Environmental Sustainability

- **Landscape** – Create a contrast of living elements in both designed and conserved wildlife habitats
- **Air Quality** – Improve air quality through the planting of a variety of native and ornamental tree species & shrubs.
- **Climate Change** – Tree planting will absorb harmful gases as well as cooling air through the emission of moisture
- **Flood Control** – the provision of greenspaces allows water to infiltrate the ground, recharges groundwater supplies and reducing run off
- **Transport** – Increase visual continuity and connectivity for the pedestrian through the provision of linked footpaths
- **Biodiversity** – Provide a range of habitats for wildlife, linking them together to create wildlife corridors

Landscape Design Brief

The Landscape Design Brief is to be adopted when taking forward the design development for City Park. This must give consideration to both the concept design of the space as a whole but also be taken through into the detailed design of City Park. The key elements of this brief develop and expand on the principles above and can be summarised as follows:

The Park will be a public open space of high quality design that will encourage people to use and respect it.

A well-used park is a successful park. In order to achieve this:

- o Spaces must be multi-functional and flexible in approach.
- o Spaces must be inclusive for a diversity of users throughout the weekdays, weekend and seasons.
- o The park must maintain, reinforce and introduce links to its immediate surroundings and further out into Leeds.

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To achieve these key elements of the brief the design needs to give consideration to the following design requirements:-

Design Requirements — City

- Increase variety and number of attractions and events which will attract visitors/tourists
- Maximise use of daylight, high air quality, external views and secure environments
- Ensure buildings face on to greenspace and have active frontages
- Greenspace design must be of High quality, place making to encourage occupiers
- Design and maintain a facility that achieves the Green Flag Standard
- Be a first step in the creation of a linear City Park, stretching from the River Aire to the education hub, whilst made up of a series of spaces, feels like a unified place
- Be designed taking into account durability and ease of maintenance, intended uses and accessibility.
- Include materials that will have robustness, aesthetics and maintenance in mind, and tie the various elements of the park together.
- Comprise many playable spaces, primarily 'incidental' play spaces where the landscape encourages and invites creative play.

Design Requirements — People

- Provide good, well connected access to, within and out of the greenspace for different users that are linked to the city or district centres
- Include spaces that will be joined by landscaped linkways to create a continuous park.
- Use varied surface treatments to provide visual interest and varied textures
- Provide high quality signage and other wayfinding interventions, where required, but keeping clutter to a minimum
- Provide areas for relaxation, recuperation and quiet enjoyment, a range of circular walks, viewpoints and interpretation and information
- Provide co-ordinated park furniture that enhances the aesthetics of the greenspace and gives a sense of place
- Provide safe and secure cycle storage which integrates with the parks design
- Provide connectivity to surrounding areas, improving accessibility east west and north south, with a logical network of improved pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Provide flexible amenity, hard and soft, across a range of different spaces to enable as many as possible appropriate activities to take place, whilst considering the need for local residents and workers to realise quiet enjoyment of their homes or workplaces.

Design Requirements — Nature

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- Provide for a range of linked habitats and wildlife corridors, including different types of grassland – amenity, meadow, native and ornamental shrub planting
- Utilise a variety of sensitive management regimes to maximise the value and diversity of habitats
- Provide a variety of native and ornamental tree species, suitable for their location – street trees, avenue trees, parkland trees and woodland
- Explore the opportunity to utilise water as part of the parks fabric
- Reduce/cut out the use of pesticides and recycle/compost where possible
- Design increased areas for planting to create carbon sinks, improve air quality, manage water resources and provide shade in summer
- Provide and improve the setting of the historic buildings (listed and unlisted) including Salem Church, The Tetley, Duke Studios etc.

City Park Legacy

Using the design strategy and design requirements as set out above, the brief will ensure that the City Park is successful and leaves a legacy ensuring that City Park has:-

- **National and International Importance**
- Worldwide significance and a tourist destination
- **Regional Importance** – Yorkshire and Humberside
- Be renowned across the region and play a part in drawing visitors into the area
- **City Wide Importance** – Leeds
- Be of importance to the community within the whole settlement
- **Neighbourhood Importance** – Ward (City and Hunslet) be able to provide something special that adds to the distinctiveness of the neighbourhood within a settlement
- **Local Importance** – ‘South Bank’ community
- Provide access to greenspace close to home with a range of local facilities that reflect local need.