



LEEDS
OUR SPACES
STRATEGY

Principles,
Challenges & Proposals

SUMMARY

CONSULTATION DRAFT

CITY CENTRE

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

Our ambition is that through Our Spaces Strategy our public realm becomes the city's greatest cultural asset.





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INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Leeds sits at the Heart of the UK's Northern Powerhouse, at the centre of one of the strongest and most resilient economies in Europe and within one of the most beautiful regions in the world. Leeds truly is a special place to be. It was built on a heritage as a financial sector, a leading manufacturing base and a healthcare innovator. This has fuelled growth of over 40% in the last decade alone.

Leeds is a growing city with a population estimated at 781,700 (ONS 2016), an increase of around 50,000 in the last decade. Over the last decade our City has experienced a rapid transformation, with urban regeneration accompanied by a flourishing cultural scene, thriving entertainment and nightlife, an unrivalled retail offer alongside a growing independent food and drink reputation: all of which is set within a city centre with a stunning heritage, with more listed buildings than any other English city outside of London.

With over 75 ethnic groups representing approximately 11.6% of the total population, Leeds has the greatest national diversity in the UK outside of London. The city positively embraces its diverse and rich heritage. We put children and young people at the heart of what we do, supporting them through their education, sporting and musical ambitions and ensuring that we are developing and creating a city for them and future generations.



Leeds is a special place to be. The place that inspired Hockney and Moore. There is a unique quality to Yorkshire and Leeds. Just a short journey from the city takes you into moorland, mountains and rivers of North Yorkshire Moors, the Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District. The reputation of the City and its offer to businesses, residents and visitors has raised its profile above and beyond expectations. In Summer 2017, Lonely Planet voted Leeds as one of the top five European Cities to visit which was followed shortly after by The Times who listed Leeds as the number one cultural place to live in the UK.

Building on this phenomenal foundation, we intend to transform how our City looks and feels, through the adoption of 'Our Spaces' strategy alongside the widespread redevelopment of our public spaces and the creation of new cultural facilities. We will also continue engagement with our residents and businesses in creating a place that can balance a strong economy with a Compassionate City, embracing being a Child Friendly City and setting this at the heart of everything we do. Our Spaces Strategy study area is defined by the Leeds Core Strategy City Centre Map extent.



Corn Exchange © Vagabrothers



Malham Cove, Yorkshire Dales © VisitBritain Lee Beel



Royal Armouries © Andy Deane

1.1 LEEDS: THE CITY

Leeds is the third largest city in the United Kingdom and also lies within the United Kingdom's fourth-most populous urban area, with a population of 2.6 million.

As one of the most diverse economies of the all the UK's main employment centres Leeds has seen the fastest rate of private-sector jobs growth of any UK city. It also has the highest ratio of private to public sector jobs of all the UK's Core Cities, with 77% of its workforce working in the private sector. Leeds has the third-largest jobs total by local authority area, with 480,000 in employment and self-employment at the beginning of 2015. Leeds is home to over 119,000 companies generating 5% of England's total economic output of £64.6 billion, and is also ranked as a gamma world city by the Globalization and World Cities Research Network. Leeds is also served by four universities, and has the fourth largest student population in the country and the country's fourth largest urban economy.

Today, Leeds has become the largest legal and financial centre, outside London with the financial and insurance services industry worth £13 billion to the city's economy which accounts for 38% of total output with more than 30 national and international banks located in the city, including an office of the Bank of England. Leeds is also the UK's third-largest manufacturing centre with around 1,800 firms and 39,000 employees. Leeds manufacturing firms account for 8.8% of total employment in the city and is worth over £7 billion to the local economy.

Leeds is one of the few cities to have its own Opera and ballet companies as well as City Varieties Music Hall and west Yorkshire Playhouse. The Royal Armouries, Henry Moore Institute and Thackray Medical Museum are some of the international cultural brands making up our impressive list of 17 museums and 27 galleries sitting alongside home-grown favourites such as The Tetley, Sunny Bank Mills, Left Bank and Gallery Munroe House.



Image © Carl Milner



Guiliano Contadini, Hannah Bateman & Northern Ballet : The Great Gatsby © Bill Cooper2

1.2 LEEDS: IT'S PEOPLE

Leeds is rapidly changing and will look and feel vastly different by 2030. There are 781,700 people living in Leeds and it is estimated that the population will grow to 819,000 by 2024 and exceed 1,000,000 by 2030. Of the current population 140 ethnic groups are represented. There are 170 languages spoken, the most common other than English are: Polish (6,717 people), Urdu (4,989 people) and Punjabi (4,537 people).

With such a large and diverse population it is no surprise that Leeds's cultural offer is World Class. It includes a number of large organisations that have been generations in the making. Leeds College of Music gave Europe its first Jazz qualification and celebrated turning 50 in 2016, with Phoenix Dance blowing out the candles on 35 years the same year. Leeds West Indian Carnival, Europe's oldest, celebrated 50 years in 2017, alongside 40 years of Henry Moore Institute. Over the next five years Leeds Grand Theatre will be 140 years old, Opera North will turn 40, Northern Ballet will celebrate 50 years, West Yorkshire Playhouse will turn 30, and Northern Film School will hit half a century.

Our city has also continually created space for new voices to add to this vibrant tapestry. The Tetley has just turned three after reinvigorating the city's iconic brewery, Transform Festival has flown the West Yorkshire Playhouse nest and has just completed its second year as an independent festival and Leeds Indie Food Festival has just completed its fourth year celebrating the city's growing independent food and drink culture. Organisations such as Duke Studios, East Street Arts and FutureLabs are holding space for individual artists, designers, illustrators and producers, helping their creativity and businesses to thrive. Not only does this vast range of organisations present remarkable shows, the majority also run extensive engagement programmes benefiting millions of people every year.



Image © M Spadafora

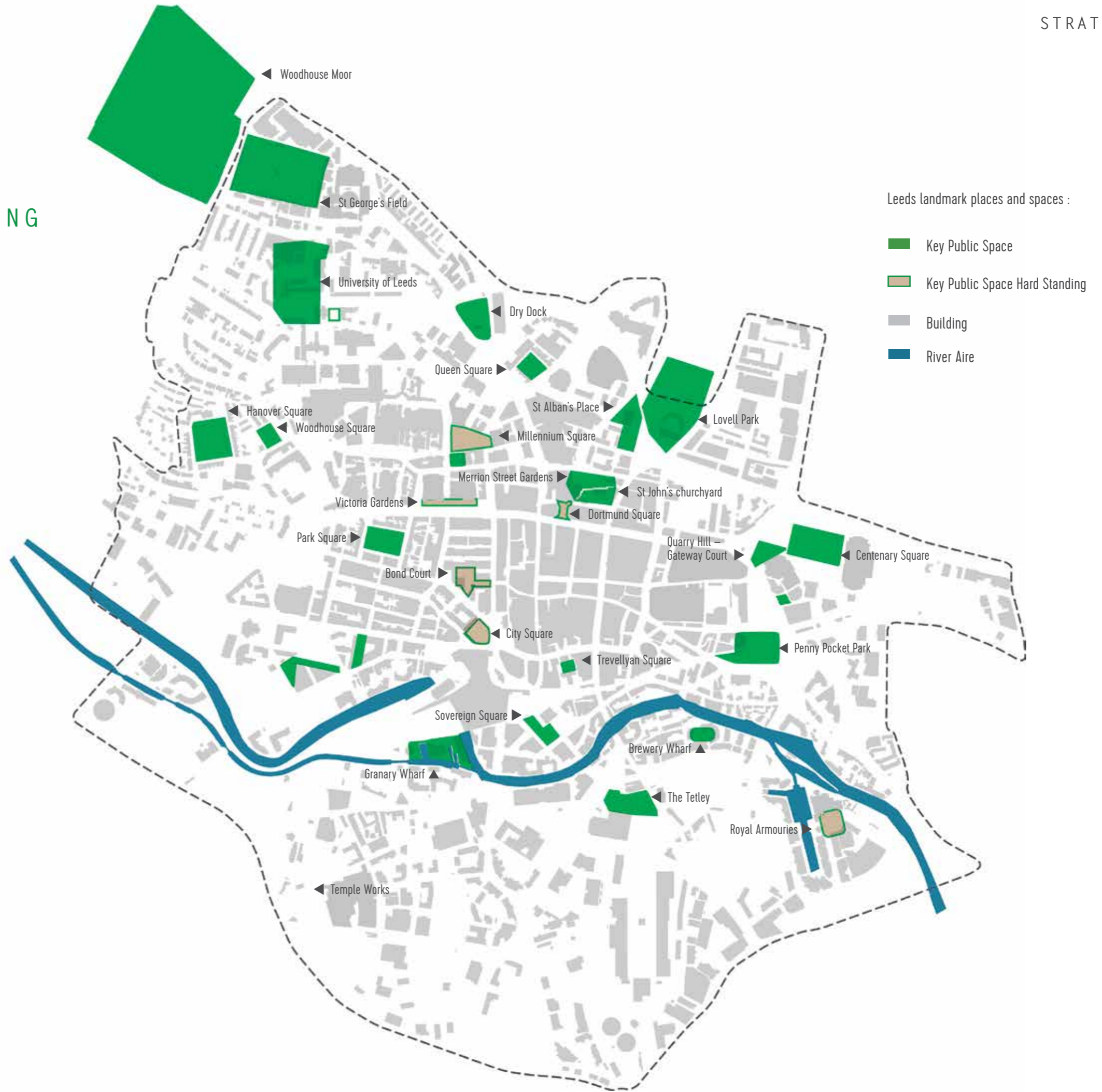


Leeds Indie Food Festival © Tom Joy



© Northern Ballet

1.4 OUR EXISTING SPACES



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OUR CHALLENGES



2.1 THE IDENTITY OF LEEDS

The character of the city is diverse in appearance, density and use. However, the public realm often lacks distinctiveness.

Challenges:

1. The design of principal streets, such as the Inner Loop Road and The Headrow, assist in dividing rather than connecting a number of character areas throughout Leeds, including the Innovation District, Civic Quarter and the central Retail and Leisure Core, creating a sense of severance and disconnection;
2. The public space offer around a number of landmark buildings, including the Corn Exchange, Town Hall, Tetley's Brewery and Tower Works is often limited in extent or quality, offering a poor setting to the building and it's use;
3. Public space and nearby streets to transport hubs including Leeds Train Station and Leeds Bus Station, could more effectively create a defined sense of arrival within Leeds and a more positive impression of the city.
4. The South Bank has less diversity and definition of character in comparison to city areas to the north of the river, with more homogeneous and widespread areas of lower density industry and commercial development. This results in the South Bank expressing a character which is not identifiably unique or 'of Leeds'



2.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF LEEDS

People perceive and experience the true nature and qualities of Leeds when on foot or bicycle, however the city centre is fundamentally designed around vehicle travel.

Challenges:

1. Leeds is a city where 53.6% of commuters still drive to work, describing itself as the 'Motorway City of the North' in the 1970s. This legacy continues to make the city centre heavily focused around vehicle travel;
2. Principal city streets such as Park Row, Boar Lane, New Market Street and the Headrow are key points of arrival for many people entering the city by bus or train, however they are largely dominated by highway and bus service infrastructure, fostering a chaotic and cluttered understanding of Leeds;
3. Landmark spaces such as City Square and Victoria Square and number of smaller spaces, including Dortmund Square and around the Corn Exchange, are negatively impacted upon by the presence of higher traffic volumes; associated noise levels and vehicle moment;
4. Wide spread and large scale highway infrastructure is prominent to the South Bank, detracting from the overall pedestrian experience and sense of place.
5. Many of the pedestrianised streets provide a better quality experience, which partially highlights the challenge - to create high quality pedestrian experience along side other modes of transport.



Pedestrian and cyclist environment:

- **Good quality:**
Pedestrian priority, low levels of street clutter, opportunities for sitting, Attractive edges. Positive sensory qualities. Presence of trees and elements of greenery
- **Moderate quality:**
Attractive edges with some detracting elements. Some positive public realm elements. Highway infrastructure encroaches on quality of experience. Moderate sensory qualities. Some greenery.
- **Poor quality:**
Vehicle priority, dominated by highway infrastructure and street clutter, limited and unattractive public realm. Undesirable sensory qualities. Little or no greenery.

2.5 A GROWING LEEDS

Leeds is evolving and expanding, particularly within the South Bank to provide more opportunities for people live, work and learn within Leeds.

Challenges:

1. The South Bank is to undergo extensive regeneration as part of the South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework and is to include the Integrated Station Masterplan.
2. Ensuring that proposed development areas to the South Bank are well connected to the city core is important to their future success.
3. New development will need to overcome major highway infrastructure to be well integrated with the city
4. The HS2 connection segregates the South Bank into two areas. Ensuring interconnectivity between the two areas is crucial





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OUR PRINCIPLES

3.0 OUR PRINCIPLES

Our Principles aim to address the various challenges that the city faces both at present and in the future in relation to its public realm.

The principles are ambitious, but present a realistic picture of what Leeds will look like as a world class city. Leeds will be a substantially greener and better connected city, that is more accessible to more people and recognisable as a unique place to be.

The principles have been developed in consultation with Leeds City Council and the Quality Spaces and Places Forum of the Leeds Chamber of Commerce.

PEOPLE FIRST

Our spaces will be designed for people. They will be comfortable, stimulating, relaxing and safe



THIS IS LEEDS

Our spaces will celebrate Leeds' built and natural assets, from the edges of the River Aire to the magnificent architecture of the city centre

ECONOMIC SENSE

Our spaces will be valuable economic infrastructure, that supports businesses and provide a canvas for new investment



MAKE IT HAPPEN

Our spaces will be places for cultural activity, from small interactions to major events



EVERYONE WELCOME

Our spaces will be inclusive, designed for all ages, abilities and reflect Leeds' diverse communities



GREENER FUTURE

Our spaces will be resilient to climate change, with green environments cooling the air, sustainably managing surface water and absorbing carbon



BETTER CONNECTED

Our spaces will be highly connected, considering pedestrians first, clearly legible and easily navigable

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TRANSFORMING THE CITY

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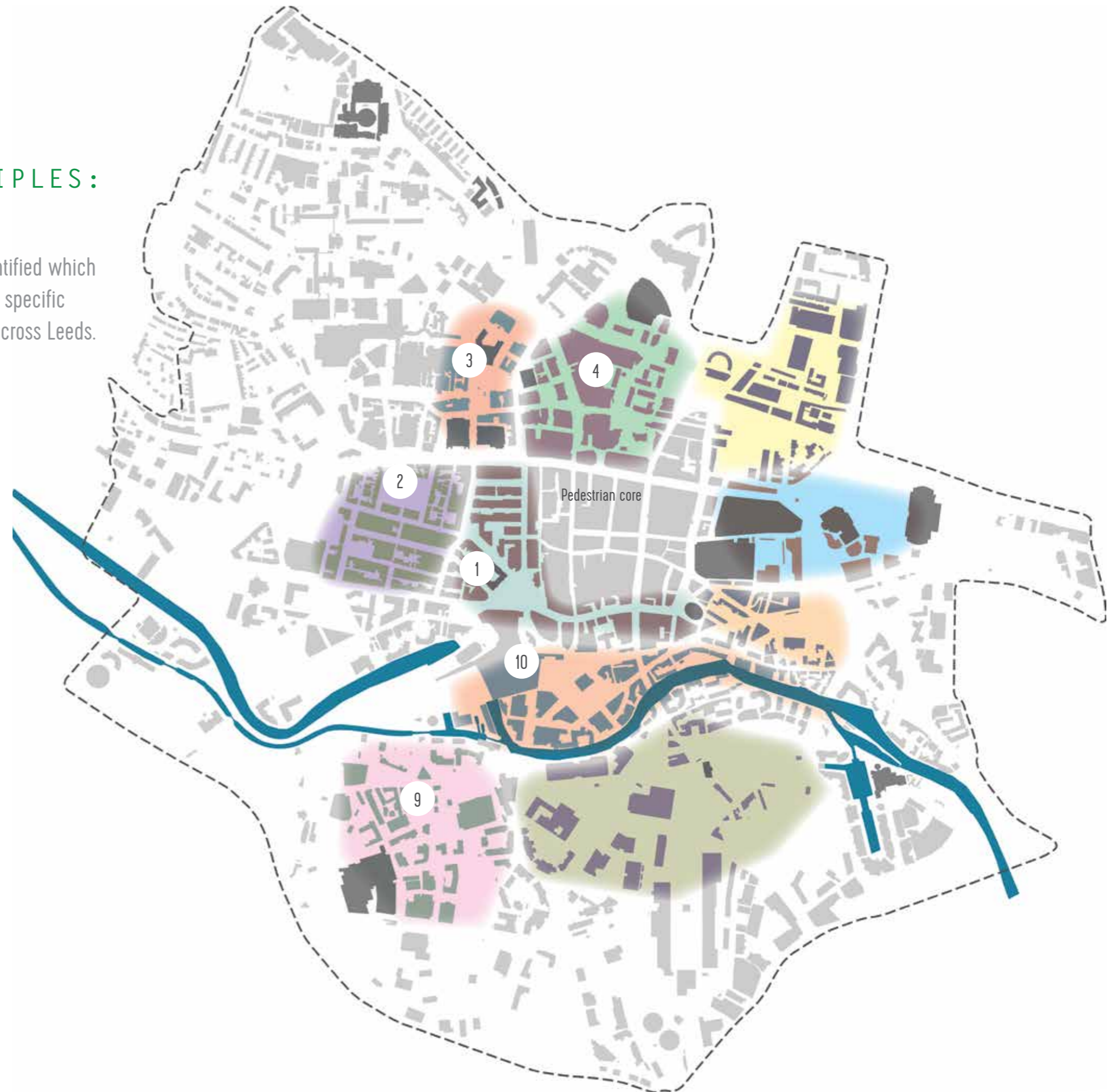


4.5 APPLYING OUR PRINCIPLES: KEY INTERVENTIONS

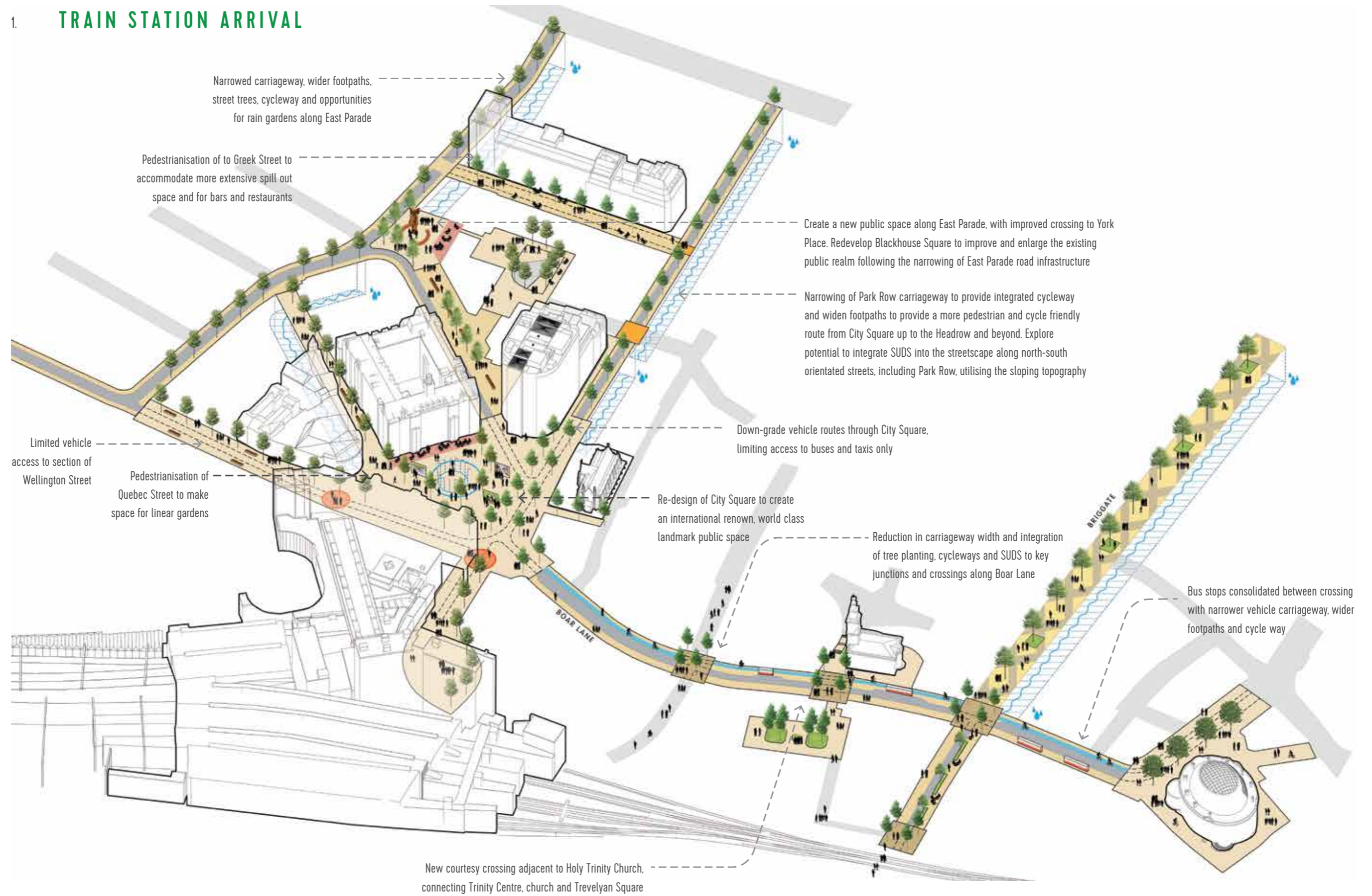
A number of key intervention areas have been identified which provide opportunities to introduce Our Principles to specific streets, public spaces and highway infrastructure across Leeds.

The intervention areas are separated into distinct parts of the city with their own unique characteristics, use and function. Individually, each area has the potential to integrate a range of City Principles, and apply to the future design of these areas to transform them into more vibrant, world class public realm.

- 1 Train Station Arrival
- 2 Western Business District
- 3 Civic Heart
- 4 Arena Quarter
- 5 Mabgate
- 6 Cultural Quarter
- 7 Kirkgate and The Calls
- 8 South Bank
- 9 South Bank West
- 10 City Riverside



1. TRAIN STATION ARRIVAL





8. SOUTH BANK: CITY



DRAFT FOR ENGAGEMENT

City Park

City Park is to be an ambitious and large scale public park to the South Bank, providing a variety of opportunities to engage with the outdoors.

The park will be a destination and focal point of the South Bank regeneration, attracting visitors from across the city.

There is potential for the park to incorporate sustainable water management, acting as a landscaped catchment for the South Bank.

The park will also provide enhanced opportunities to engage with the river and provide attractive walking and cycle routes towards the city centre.

Viaduct Landscapes

Spaces between buildings and around the new viaduct are to offer opportunities to access greenery and space for outdoor activity.

It is important that the viaduct is grounded within an attractive and vibrant city environment.

Learning new tricks at the Viaduct skate park

Looking at the bird life living around the flood basins

Having a great time at the City Park festival

4.8 WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

The development of the 'Our Spaces' Strategy is a landmark moment for the city. Yet, the absence of a strategy that paves the way for the development of key public realm intervention has not been a hindrance. We inherently understand the importance and value of high quality spaces to the people and success of the city. Following the delivery of the new greenspace at Sovereign Square, a number of public realm schemes have been developed that are now either on site or in design, what we will look to bring forward over the next 2-3 years. These include:

1. **Quarry Hill, Gateway Court** – on site, due for completion September 2018
2. **Clay Pit Lane** – on site, due for completion Autumn 2018
3. **Sovereign Square footbridge** – construction 2019
4. **Merrion Way** – narrowing of Merrion Way to increase public realm offer
5. **Queen Square** – new child friendly playspace
6. **Meadow Lane** – Leeds City Council's contribution to City Park, design ongoing
7. **New Briggate** – closure of New Briggate to create new space





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ANIMATING OUR SPACES

5.1 CULTURE AND PUBLIC SPACE

Leeds has set a bold new vision for public space to become its greatest cultural asset, embedding culture into streets, parks and urban space. The city will be unapologetic in its appreciation for art and culture, setting it apart as a destination where local and global artists, directors, makers and creators come to collaborate, building an international reputation, attracting future investment and ensuring that the communities of the city have a civic sense of pride and ownership in our urban environment

Leeds seeks to embrace the value of cultural and public life through its Culture Strategy for 2017-2030. The Culture Strategy sets a broad definition of culture and challenges people to think beyond the traditional confines of what is perceived to be 'cultural', embracing art, performance, music, food, sport, architecture, language, design and identity and reflecting it throughout public spaces.

Through the creation of the new spaces outlined in this strategy and the reimagining of existing public space, Leeds will employ a range of temporary, tactical, pop-up, and permanent solutions to embed culture across the diverse ecology of spaces. These are discussed in more detail within this document.

To help shape and guide how public areas are animated by culture, a series of Cultural Standards have been developed. A summary of the five Cultural Standards are as follows:

- 1 Playful and Permissive: Leeds is to become a child-friendly city, welcoming children and young people into the city centre and its public spaces. This is to be achieved through offering engaging and exciting streets and spaces that can be enjoyed with carers, parents and grandparents, creating welcoming and enjoyable intergenerational experiences.
- 2 Collaborative & Curious: In commissioning events, festivals, and art works Leeds will promote collaboration, bringing together different worlds and creative practices to create unique experiences. The city's Communities will be at the heart of programming; involving, engaging and representing our people in our spaces.
- 3 Experimentation & Expression: Public space will be used to bring together technology, art, science and culture, creating opportunities for the city

and its people to decide whether or not a gallery can be in the open air, or whether bandstands and quiet corners can become the scene of world class theatre.

- 4 Local and Global: As Leeds expands, there is a unique opportunity to reconnect communities through the spaces, streets, avenues and squares of the city. Having created world class cultural events and festivals from comics and food to film and art, Leeds has the chance to create a public realm that is a fitting platform for both local and international talent and creativity.
- 5 Excellence of experience: A show is only as good as its stage and Leeds intends to ensure that public space becomes the greatest stage in the city, offering small moments of joy and delight alongside large scale spectacle.



5.6 HAVE YOUR SAY

Following Executive Board we want to have an open conversation with you to build upon the socially conscious approach to public space within the forthcoming Our Spaces Strategy. Please look out for further information in the Autumn.

It is important that extensive engagement with various stakeholders and demographics is carried out. This will enable key aspirations relating to inclusivity, accessibility and culture to be more comprehensively realised in the future and tailored to the people of Leeds.

It is critical that public space within Leeds provides more opportunities for more people and that the city is able to welcome, accommodate and sustain visitation by a greater variety of ages, abilities and social and cultural origins.

A meaningful and comprehensive engagement plan will be established which recognises the key aspirations of the Our Spaces Strategy.



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