

# Redevelopment of City Square – Outcome of the Design Competition and Appointment of the Preferred Designer

Date: 23 June 2021

Report of: Director of City Development

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

## **What is this report about?**

### **Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions**

- This report presents the outcome of the design competition for the redevelopment of City Square as the premier area of city centre public realm, the first experience that many people have of Leeds when arriving in the city and a key gateway for visitors, workers and residents. The report seeks approval to the appointment of the preferred designer who will work proactively with the Council and stakeholders to redevelop City Square from the design concept submitted as part of the design competition into an approved design.
- Following the March 2020 Executive Board, which approved the launch of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) led design competition and the formal sign off for the Design Brief in November 2020. The objective was to seek design responses to the City Square Design Brief to develop a vision for the 'creation of world class, vibrant and inclusive public realm' as set out in the Our Spaces Strategy, as well as addressing challenges around air quality, climate change, biodiversity. The design competition was formally launched on the 21st September 2020.
- The November 2020 Executive Board, following approval of the Design Brief developed with the RIBA, gave approval to the Design Brief to be issued to the shortlist of 5 designers for the progression in to Phase 2 of the competition on Monday 7th December 2020.
- The design competition has now completed, with the design review panel and independent considerations by the Civic Trust and the Quality Spaces and Places Group, identifying a preferred designer. The preferred designer is Re-form Landscape Architecture, who are a Leeds based company and throughout the design evaluation demonstrated a passion and determination to work in partnership with the Council and stakeholders to evolve their design concept to ensure that City Square re-establishes itself as the City's premier area of public realm.

- The proposals in this report support the ambitions of the Best Council Plan 2020-2025 for Sustainable Infrastructure, Child- Friendly City, Age-Friendly Leeds, Culture and also responds to the declaration of a Climate Emergency:-

### **Sustainable Infrastructure**

- A redesigned City Square will improve public transport connections, safety and reliability.
- Removing general traffic on City Square and the provision of bus corridors will provide a safer environment, enhance the public transport offer and aid the ease of passenger transport connections.

### **Child- Friendly City**

- A new City Square will enhance the city now and for future generations and supports our ambition to be a child friendly city.

### **Age-Friendly Leeds**

- The redesign of City Square will support accessible and affordable transport options which help older people get around.
- The redesigned City Square will be accessible, safe, clean and welcoming.

### **Culture**

- The redesigned City Square will provide the opportunity to grow the cultural sector by providing a programmable space for events, particularly for the year of culture in 2023.
- The accessibility of the redesigned City Square will ensure that culture can be created and experienced by everyone.
- The redesigned City Square will enhance the image of Leeds by providing space for events and managing the arrival for people attending major events and attractions elsewhere in the city.

### **The Climate Emergency**

- The increase in green infrastructure of City Square as part of the public realm design will increase carbon capture, improve air quality and assist the management of water runoff during extreme weather events supporting our ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030.

### **Health and Well-Being**

- Reducing health inequalities and improving the health of the poorest the fastest.
- Supporting healthy, physically active lifestyles.

### **Recommendations**

- a) Approve the appointment of the preferred designer, Re-form Landscape Architecture to develop the conceptual design proposals to the end of the RIBA Concept Design Stage.
- b) Approve the Authority to Spend up to a maximum of £250k to develop the conceptual design to the end of the RIBA Concept Design Stage.
- c) Approve entering into a Professional Service Short Subcontract with Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering (BB) for the post-competition design fees up to the end of the RIBA Concept Design Stage.

## Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 Through a range of co-produced and collaborative strategies including the emerging Transport Strategy and the Our Spaces Strategy, Leeds is making major progress in the creation of more people focussed infrastructure and public spaces across the city centre. The vision and ambition is to create a vibrant, inclusive high quality city centre with better connected spaces which meet the needs of people first, to improve connectivity to and from surrounding neighbourhoods, help tackle the climate emergency, improve air quality and to foster health and well-being, innovation and collaboration – all whilst ensuring there is sufficient resilience within the highway network and promoting sustainable transport modes.
- 2 The approach to the city centre aims to overcome historic barriers and issues posed by dominant highways infrastructure advocated by the 1970's 'Leeds Motorway City' approach to place and infrastructure in the city. In particular, large swathes of 'through traffic' contribute to climate issues, disconnect surrounding neighbourhoods from the city centre and discourage investment.
- 3 As part of this vision was the opportunity to reimagine City Square as the City's premier area of public realm, through the closure of City Square to through traffic enabled by re-routing the Loop road and the repurposing of this infrastructure into new high quality public realm. This would enable City Square to expand from its existing area of 0.3ha to almost 1ha of public realm within the immediate confines of City Square but also then facilitates wider connections to Bishopgate Street Steps, Quebec Street, Park Row and Infirmary Street which are all undergoing development to increase pedestrian space and new public realm.
- 4 Following on from March 2020 Executive Board approval to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) led design competition and the approval of the City Square Design Brief, the design competition was launched in September 2020 and following the first round of shortlisting, the list of designers was reduced from 29 to 5.
- 5 The remaining 5 designers were issued with the Design Brief and the design competition moved in to Phase 2. This required the 5 designers to produce a design narrative and concept for a new City Square which would fall within the high level construction only budget of £3.5m. To create a reimagined City Square which is central to City's identify and welcome and should be a place which welcomes people, which is also an approachable space which resonates with the citizens of Leeds and supports healthy lifestyles. Our vision for a new City Square should respond to Leeds aspirations to create a world class public realm space that puts people first, incorporates tactical urbanism and addresses climate change. City Square is to be our 'front door' to visitors, businesses and residents. It sets the tone of our city's profile locally, nationally and internationally. It is a key gateway into the city. It will complement the surrounding landmark and listed buildings and will be central to reinforcing the city's identity. It will be central to the desire to stitch the city centre and the South Bank together.
- 6 The designers, as part of the assessment process, were asked to comment on how their team would provide quality & architectural distinction in the design concept, how they would enhance the public realm experience and how a design would relate to the immediate surroundings and create an identity for the site. In addition the design teams were assessed against their presented multidisciplinary teams' make up, experience of delivering similar projects and stakeholder engagement undertaken.
- 7 The outcome of the design competition is that Re-form Landscape Architecture were identified as the preferred designers following the independent assessment and scoring of all of the design competition panel members and the presentation of the design concepts. Re-form scored highest in the qualitative questions when measured against the Design

Brief and scored equal to the financial questions when compared to the second highest scoring bidder.

- 8 The design concept that Re-form are proposing is 'The Glade'. It is a woodland in the heart of the city and is conceptually the reincarnation of the ancient Forest of Loidis, the woodland on which Leeds is built. The Glade forms a circle and mirrors the form of City Square that was present in its first incarnation in 1897. The Design Concept is shown at Appendix 1 - City Square Design Concept.
- 9 The Glade respects the heritage of the square and provides a positive setting for the existing buildings.
- 10 The Glade proposes opportunities for informal play to attract children and families which will support our Child Friendly ambition. There are no proposals for 'standard play equipment', these are important but the design sees these as being better placed in formal play settings such as playgrounds and parks. The Glade will have opportunities for children to 'make their own play', with platforms and rock steps to climb and jump off, explore the planting, the water feature and dash through the urban woodland. The design proposals provide a space for all ages that is interesting and engaging and is also flexible to be a place for cultural activity from small interactions to larger events when required.
- 11 Designers were asked to comment on the appropriateness of their design proposal in response to the design outcomes including but not limited to materiality, sustainability, and functionality and strengthening the green character of the area.
- 12 The Glade supports the Climate Emergency Declaration (March 2019) through carbon absorption, rainwater management, reuse of materials and the selection of trees based on their air cleaning capabilities. The Glade can also provide a canopy to protect against the increasing sunny days and higher temperatures. The planting will be selected to support pollinators and will bring birds and raise the levels of biodiversity within the city centre.
- 13 The Glade is designed to be for everyone. The design proposals account for the peak periods of pedestrians entering and exiting the station and moving on through to the city. This is balanced by The Glade being welcoming for all generations, there is choice between shaded and open areas, resting spaces with benches that have a range of heights and back reset but are inclusive for all. There is circulation spaces for wheelchairs and buggies.
- 14 The Glade is designed to be a gateway as well as a destination with a network of two-way cycle routes to allow cycle connections through City Square with clear segregation from people and traffic. The design will be complementary to the proposals within the June 2021 Executive Board report 'Transforming Cities Fund – Leeds City Centre Cycling Improvements'.
- 15 Designers were asked to comment on their proposed team structure, understanding of Leeds City Council and stakeholder expectations and ability to work in partnership.
- 16 Re-form are a Leeds based practice and have collaborated with Leeds City Council previously on Sovereign Square, Leeds Playhouse Gardens. In addition they were the lead designers for Hull's City of Culture in 2017 which saw the transformation of Hull's public realm in the city centre as part of the year.
- 17 Their enthusiasm for the project was particularly evident in their presentation and their commitment to stakeholder engagement. Their design proposals include the planting of 33 trees, each one representing a Leeds ward. Their submitted design proposal included working with the wards and with people of all ages and backgrounds to select trees from around the world that will illustrate Leeds' strength of diversity. Each tree will be planted by a ward representative and will be marked with the name of the ward that it represents.

- 18 Re-form are a member of the Quality Spaces and Places group, a sub group of the Chamber Commerce and are actively involved in partnership working with Leeds City Council to provide excellent public realm.
- 19 City Square is being designed and built through the Scape framework as part of a programme also delivering Bishopgate Street Steps, Regent Street Bridge, and Armley Gyratory.
- 20 The design brief specified that the competition submissions target a direct construction cost of £3.5m., with an overall budget of £7m– £9.5m, which includes enabling / interface works, prelims, fees and delivery costs.
- 21 Scape is a National Civil Engineering framework, covering England, Northern Ireland and Wales, that is compliant with UK and EU procurement regulations. The framework will operate for a total of four years and will provide direct access for any public sector organisation to a principal contractor for civil engineering and infrastructure projects with values between £50,000 and £100m+.
- 22 A Professional Service Short Subcontract is required so that the Council has an appropriate contractual position and partnership working arrangement with BB. The agreement will provide the contractor with stage payments and assurance that they will be reimbursed for costs incurred for surveys and fees incurred should the scheme be cancelled, and provide the Council with assurance of agreed fixed design fees for work prior to the main contract.

#### What impact will this proposal have?

**Wards affected: Little London & Woodhouse and Hunslet & Riverside**

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

- 23 City Square will increase the available public realm from 0.3 hectare to approximately 1 hectare creating a space which welcomes people, speaks of our diverse communities and resonates with the citizens of Leeds and supports healthy lifestyles.

#### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 24 The report 'Redevelopment of City Square' was submitted to Executive Board on the 18th March and the recommendation to commission a RIBA led design competition to determine design options for the future redesign of City Square was approved.
- 25 A second report 'Redevelopment of City Square – Design Brief' was submitted to Executive Board in November 2020 and approval was obtained to issue a Design Brief to support the design competition.
- 26 Engagement has been undertaken as part of the Our Spaces strategy detailed in the March 2020 Executive Board report (Our Spaces Strategy – Outcome of Engagement and Strategy Update). In addition Connecting Leeds have undertaken extensive consultation on their proposed improvements to city centre gateways. Proposals for the Headrow and Corn Exchange Gateways include Our Spaces public realm schemes with recent consultation on the Corn Exchange gateway (2264 contributions received from over 500 people) resulting in specific support for limiting access to the city centre by private car, including for environmental reasons and improved public realm and greenery.
- 27 As part of the competition process four key stakeholders with a presence on City Square and the Civic Trust each gave feedback to the five designers on their design proposals.

- 28 Independently the Civic Trust have provided commentary which has been considered as part of the selection of the preferred designer.
- 29 The Quality Spaces and Places group, a sub group of the Chamber of Commerce have provided commentary which has been consider as part of the selection of the preferred bidder.
- 30 Ward Members and the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development have been briefed on the outcome of the design competition and the preferred bidder.
- 31 Next Steps
  - 31.1 The programme below (42) demonstrates the key milestones.
  - 31.2 A four week period has been allowed in the programme to undertake internal and targeted external consultation at the end of the RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility proposals.
  - 31.3 Full stakeholder engagement will be undertaken at the end of the RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design.

### **What are the resource implications?**

- 32 City Square has Capital Programme Fund approval of £500k for feasibility work. The Design competition costs of £238k were approved by the Chief Officer Asset Management & Regeneration through a delegated decision in April 2020.
- 33 The post-competition design fees are to be determined but will not exceed £250k.

### **What are the legal implications?**

- 34 None of the contents of this report are exempt or confidential under the access to information rules detailed in the constitution.
- 35 The decision is a Key Decision and is subject to call in.
- 36 The tenders have been evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the tender documents and therefore the preferred contractor should be appointed.

### **What are the key risks and how are they being managed?**

- 37 Risk is to be managed through application of 'best practice' project management tools and techniques via the City Council's 'PM Lite' risk methodology. Risk management forms just one part of PM Lite and further details on risk can be seen in the Insite page: <https://insite.leeds.gov.uk/toolkits/managing-a-service/riskmanagement>. The progress of the scheme (RAG rating and comments) will also be included in the routine reporting to the council's Strategic Investment Board.
- 38 Project Management resource has been allocated from within City Development to manage the project and risk. City Square also has a project board already well established where the interfaces and delivery of the project will be managed.
- 39 A priced risk log is being developed for the scheme by Leeds City Council and the contractor will be engaged to contribute to its development to ensure all the risks for the project have been identified together with the relevant owner of the risk. The priced risk

register will be used to inform the client contingency for the project. The council's project risk log will be maintained and updated throughout the project and escalation of any risks that sit outside of the agreed tolerances will be managed via the City Square Project Board.

- 40 A client held contingency, commensurate with a project of this value, will be included within the approval figure to address any risks that occur during construction. The client held contingency will be calculated as the project progresses.

### Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

- Inclusive Growth       Health and Wellbeing       Climate Emergency

This proposal to support the council's three Key pillars is considered in the section 'What is this report about?'

### Options, timescales and measuring success

#### a) What other options were considered?

41 Not applicable.

#### b) How will success be measured?

42 The production of a concept design that is approved and allocated a budget by Executive Board.

#### c) What is the timetable for implementation?

43 Concept Design will begin in July 2021 and complete January 2022 with a planned submission to Executive Board for approval May/June 2022.

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
<b>RIBA 1</b>			
RIBA 1 Period	8 wks	Wed 21/07/21	Tue 14/09/21
Gateway Review/Consultation	4 wks	Wed 15/09/21	Tue 12/10/21
<b>RIBA 2</b>			
RIBA 2 Period	10 wks	Wed 13/10/21	Tue 04/01/22
Gateway Review	4 wks	Wed 05/01/22	Tue 18/01/22
44 Stakeholder Engagement	12 wks	Wed 19/01/22	Tue 12/04/22

### Appendices

- 45 Appendix 1 - City Square Design Concept  
46 Appendix 2 EDCI Redevelopment of City Square

### Background papers

47 Not applicable.