



**Report of Director of City Development**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 21st April 2021**

**Subject: City Centre Transformation – Enabling Schemes (Highways)**

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Armley, Beeston and Holbeck, Hunslet and Riverside, Little London and Woodhouse	
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	
Appendix number:	

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- Previous approvals have been obtained from Executive Board relating to the development of highway and transportation schemes at City Square and Armley Gyratory, as key enablers of the City Centre Vision. This report consolidates information on those decisions, and is now seeking approval of the designs and (subject to completion of statutory and non-statutory processes) confirmation to implement them.
- Through a range of co-produced and collaborative strategies, the city is making major progress in the delivery of people centric infrastructure and public spaces across the city centre. This strategy focusses on providing high quality spaces in between buildings 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 enjoyment community, innovation and collaboration – all whilst ensuring there is sufficient resilience within the highway network and promoting sustainable transport modes.
- 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.

- This approach has seen over £250m of investment in the last 3 years in Leeds City Centre, including the Connecting Leeds works, with major investments progressing for the 3.5 hectare green Aire Park, and the delivery of major Our Spaces schemes across the city centre. This approach is supporting the delivery of major regeneration programmes and the delivery of a vibrant mixed use environment. Continued progression of this strategy is considered to be crucial to the city's post-Covid recovery, to achieve the ambitions of the economic recovery framework, Inclusive Growth Strategy and Climate Emergency declaration, and as we plan for future growth and the delivery of the Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan.
- If the 'levelling up' of the North's economic activity is to be achieved relative to the South, Leeds must play a key role in enabling regional growth and investment. The council's approach outlined above is therefore vital not just for Leeds but the region.
- In 2008, a 'city centre vision' conference was held to take a holistic and aspirational view for the future of the city centre. This identified some 'Big Ideas' which included removing non-essential traffic by re-routing the Loop to south of the river. In June 2008 Executive Board approved progressing feasibility work on these ideas.
- The closure of City Square to through traffic – enabled by re-routing the Loop road – supports creation of a world class public space and arrival gateway for the city centre. This was intended to address significant noise and air quality issues caused by traffic using Neville Street and passing through City Square, a route which is presently designed to accommodate significant traffic flows, some of which has easy access straight off the motorway, and is going to destinations beyond the city centre. The 'dark arches' on Neville Street has been amongst the top 10 most polluted streets in the country, a particular problem because it is such a busy walking route.
- As future growth occurs, and pedestrian flows and travel demand increases, the air quality, noise and severance issues would get worse without action. In addition, the high traffic volumes in the city centre hinder our ability to reallocate roadspace to deliver improvements on other streets, to meet our wider objectives.
- With pre-Covid traffic levels, and without the effects of future changes in policy, tests showed that closing City Square would cause a significant increase in congestion without appropriate mitigation in place. Therefore a package of measures has been developed to prevent these adverse impacts. The key measures identified are improvements to the M621, especially westbound from Junction 3 to Junction 1, and changes at Armley Gyratory. These, together with a range of signal timing changes and other more minor mitigation measures, provide additional capacity on the preferred alternative route via the Inner Ring Road, and adapt the highway network to the amended traffic patterns. This view was supported by West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) in approving an Outline Business Case in 2016 for this package of measures, known as the Leeds City Centre Package (LCCP), agreeing to fund it from the West Yorkshire Plus Transport Fund (WYTF).
- In September 2016 Executive Board approved entering in to funding agreements with WYCA for the WYTF schemes including LCCP. Highways England (HE) has since agreed to progress and fund the works on the M621, and is in the advanced stages of design and preparation for implementation.
- In tandem with the 'highways' development work, the council has been developing its approach to enhancing public spaces across the city centre, leading to development of the 'Our Spaces' strategy, of which City Square forms a key

component. In 2018, Executive Board approved the draft strategy for consultation, and following positive feedback approved the final amended version for publication in March 2020. In November 2020, Executive Board endorsed progression of a design competition brief for the re-design of the public space at City Square, including removing general traffic to double the useable size of the square.

- In December 2020, Executive Board approved consultation on the draft Transport Strategy, which includes ‘pedestrianising City Square’ and ‘transforming the city centre.’
- The LCCP is evolving to react to emerging funding opportunities, and as such has been designed in tandem with a wide range of other highway schemes, all consistent with the above strategies. These schemes include LPTIP Gateways and Corridors, Transforming Cities Fund ‘station gateway’ and cycle corridors, City Connect (1, 2, and 3), ‘Grey to Green’ schemes, Network Rail works at the station, Regent Street bridge renewal, and HE’s M621 scheme.
- Although Armley Gyratory is a key enabler for the closure of City Square, and is beneficial for delivering new housing and other local developments, there are direct benefits for the local community including reducing severance and improving walking/cycling connections between New Wortley and the city centre, Whitehall Road and Kirkstall Road. This is through delivery of new or wider bridges with more accessible ramps, wider/ resurfaced footways/ cycleways, and improved landscaping to help personal security. The scheme also addresses existing road safety and delay problems.
- Consultation on the proposed design for Armley Gyratory was undertaken between August and September 2019, with engagement on the latest design revision in March and April 2021. Public consultation on the closure of City Square is to commence in June, following targeted stakeholder consultation during March 2021 to help shape the consultation exercise.
- Detailed traffic modelling is being undertaken which demonstrates that the combination of schemes listed above with the LCCP enables the delivery of the vision and mitigates the impact of traffic displacement. Details of the modelling will be made publicly available as part of the public consultation process required as part of the planning application procedure for Armley Gyratory.
- Development work on the LCCP is well advanced working towards a target completion date on site for Armley Gyratory of December 2022 with closure of City Square to all through traffic planned to facilitate possible Year of Culture events in 2023.
- The various pressures on the highway network from highway construction, utility works and developer works continue to be managed by the Network Management team and overseen by the Planning for Growth Board. Lessons from recent schemes are being fed into the work planning, but significant disruption may prove unavoidable, especially during late 2021 and through 2022. A ‘comms’ plan will be developed to ensure stakeholders are kept fully informed, to manage issues arising. This will include any arrangements around the Christmas trading period, which are yet to be defined. In addition, a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is under development which will keep track of traffic flow changes on the network, including potentially sensitive locations such as Holbeck, whilst the new Leeds UTMC Traffic Control Room in Civic will be equipped and staffed to disseminate information, and mitigate issues arising, especially for bus operations.

- The effect of the schemes described above represent the biggest change in the city centre road network since the pedestrianisation of Briggate in the 1990's and creation of the Loop Road. Given the scope and effect of the combined package of measures, approval is now sought for designs of and the implementation of City Square closure and Armley Gyratory as per the plans in Appendix 1, subject to the outcome of the Armley Gyratory Planning Application.
- For clarity, reference to the 'City Square scheme' in this report refers to the reconfiguration of the highway. The public space 'design competition' aspect of City Square, which is complementary to these proposals and mentioned above, will be the subject of subsequent reports.

## 2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The closure of City Square helps facilitate the Best City ambition by creating opportunity for a World Class public space, releasing highway for improved realm in other city centre locations, improving the environment, encouraging more city centre living, enabling investment, improving health outcomes through improving active travel facilities, and future-proofing the city centre for the arrival of key transport projects including mass transit and HS2.

## 3. Resource Implications

- Armley Gyratory and the City Square highway works are currently fully funded from the West Yorkshire Plus Transport Fund, with funding agreements in place, with an allocation of £78.8m which is also to deliver Infirmary Street Gateway/Park Row, Meadow Lane, Regent Street bridge (£12m contribution) and City Square closure complementary highway schemes.
- The release of this funding will be made by WYCA following approval of the relevant Full Business Case, with any amendments appended to the existing funding agreements.
- The programme pressures are likely to require some advance enabling works ahead of full approval by WYCA, i.e. at financial risk, to minimise disruption.
- There is currently a need to identify additional funding to fully deliver the complementary highway schemes. This gap does not jeopardise the scope or programme for delivering Armley Gyratory and City Square. The council and WYCA are working together to identify funding opportunities.

## Recommendations

- a) In the context of previous decisions taken by Executive Board and outlined in this report approve the outline design for the closure of City Square to through traffic as per the plan in Appendix 1, including the indicated bus and taxi only restrictions, noting that there may be further adjustments to the design to respond to stakeholders' needs and the proposed public consultation, at the discretion of the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation);
- b) Approve the preliminary design of Armley Gyratory as shown in Appendix 1, presented in the recent engagement, subject to any changes arising from Planning conditions or the detailed design process;

- c) Note that City Square closure (highway works) and Armley Gyratory are to be fully funded from the WYTF;
- d) Note the importance of the delivery of the Highways England M621 RIS scheme (Junctions 1 to 7) for the realisation of the city centre vision; and
- e) Note that the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation) is responsible for the programme delivery, with a target completion date of December 2022.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 Noting the previous approvals by Executive Board accepting the principle of closing City Square to through traffic and the upgrade of Armley Gyratory, this report seeks:
- approval of the outline highway design concept for the closure of City Square and its subsequent implementation in readiness for the Year of Culture; and
  - approval of the preliminary design and implementation of Armley Gyratory as presented, subject to any Planning conditions and detailed design changes.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 Through a range of co-produced and collaborative strategies, the city is making major progress in the delivery of a people centric infrastructure and public spaces across the city centre. Such strategy focusses on providing high quality spaces in between buildings which meet the needs of people first, to improve connectivity to and from surrounding neighbourhoods, help tackle the climate emergency and to foster enjoyment community, innovation and collaboration – all whilst ensuring there is sufficient resilience within the highway network and promoting sustainable transport modes.
- 2.2 The approach to the city centre aims to overcome historic barriers and issues posed by dominant highways infrastructure advocated by ‘Leeds Motorway City’ of the 70s 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.
- 2.3 This approach has seen over £250m of investment in the last 3 years in Leeds City Centre, including the Connecting Leeds works, with major investments progressing for the 3.5 hectare green Aire Park, and the delivery of major Our Spaces schemes across the city centre. This approach is supporting the delivery of major regeneration programmes and the delivery of a vibrant mixed use environment. Continued progression of this strategy is considered to be crucial to the city’s post-covid recovery as to achieve the ambitions of the economic recovery framework, Inclusive Growth Strategy and Climate Emergency declaration, as we plan for future growth and the delivery of the Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan.
- 2.4 At a Regional level, the success of Leeds city centre is vital for the prosperity of Leeds City Region, being the main driver for the regional economy. If the ‘levelling up’ of the North’s economic activity is to be achieved relative to the South, Leeds must play a key role in enabling regional growth and investment. The council’s approach outlined above is therefore vital not just for Leeds but the region.
- 2.5 In 2008, a ‘city centre vision’ conference was held to take a holistic and aspirational view for the future of the city centre. This identified some ‘Big Ideas’ grouped into

themes, one of which was connectivity, which included removing non-essential traffic by re-routing the Loop to south of the river. In June 2008 Executive Board approved progressing feasibility work on these ideas. A follow up conference in 2010 reinforced these aspirations.

- 2.6 The closure of City Square to through traffic – enabled by re-routing the Loop road – supports creation of a world class public space and arrival gateway for the city centre. This was intended to address significant noise and air quality issues caused by traffic using Neville Street and passing through City Square, a route which is presently designed to accommodate significant traffic flows, some of which has easy access straight off the motorway, and is going to destinations beyond the city centre. More than 1,800 vehicles an hour pass through City Square at peak times. Air quality monitoring in the ‘dark arches’ on Neville Street has indicated that it has been amongst the top 10 most polluted streets in the country, a problem exacerbated because it is a very busy walking route connecting the South Bank with the station and retail core, leading to large numbers of people having to endure poor air quality. The road layout and traffic volumes also sever the main station entrances from the city centre and create an unwelcoming arrival experience.
- 2.7 As future growth occurs, and pedestrian flows and travel demand increases, the air quality, noise and severance issues would get worse without action. The attractiveness of the route to drivers results in high traffic volumes on other streets such as Meadow Lane, Victoria Street, Wellington Street, East Parade, Calverley Street and Aire Street, with consequent impacts on the street environment across a wide area, and hindering our ability to reallocate roadspace to deliver improvements.
- 2.8 With pre-Covid traffic levels, and without the effects of future changes in policy, tests showed that closing City Square would cause a significant increase in congestion without appropriate mitigation in place. Therefore a package of measures has been developed to prevent these adverse impacts. The key measures identified are improvements to the M621, especially westbound from Junction 3 to Junction 2, an upgrade to the M621 Junction 2 signalised roundabout, and changes at Armley Gyratory. These, together with a range of signal timing changes and other more minor mitigation measures, provide additional capacity on the preferred alternative route via the inner ring road, and adapt the highway network to the amended traffic patterns.
- 2.9 In September 2016 Executive Board approved entering in to funding agreements with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) for spending WYCA grant money from the West Yorkshire Transport Fund (WYTF) on a specific list of schemes including City Square closure and Armley Gyratory. Works for these two major schemes, together with a number of complementary schemes, form the Leeds City Centre Package (LCCP). Highways England has also agreed to progress and fund the works on the M621. Having consulted on their scheme, Highways England has engaged a contractor and is in the advanced stages of design and preparation for implementation with a possible start-on-site date of later this year.
- 2.10 In tandem with the ‘highways’ development work, the council has been developing its approach to enhancing public spaces across the city centre, leading to development of the ‘Our Spaces’ strategy, of which City Square forms a key component. In 2018, Executive Board approved the draft strategy for consultation, and following positive feedback approved the final amended version for publication in March 2020. In November 2020, Executive Board endorsed progression of a

design competition brief for the re-design of the public space at City Square, including removing general traffic to double the useable size of the square.

- 2.11 In December 2020, Executive Board approved consultation on the draft Transport Strategy, which includes 'pedestrianising City Square' and 'transforming the city centre.' The draft Transport Strategy reflects the council's Climate Emergency declaration, by setting out to make Leeds a city where 'you don't need to own a car,' and by promoting a range of solutions intended to reduce carbon dioxide emissions towards the 2030 target. The interventions proposed would make Leeds city centre more accessible by a range of modes, helping realise outcomes from the Transport Strategy's parallel documents, namely the Inclusive Growth Strategy, Our Spaces Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 2.12 The LCCP is evolving to react to emerging funding opportunities, and as such has been designed in tandem with a wide range of other highway schemes, all consistent with the above strategies. These schemes below are either complete, currently on-site or planned to be within the next 24-36 months, including:
- Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme 'Gateway' and 'Corridor' schemes including Infirmary Street, Park Row, Headrow, Corn Exchange, Meadow Lane, and 'A61(S) corridor' (programme endorsed by Executive Board in June 2017);
  - Transforming Cities Fund changes at Leeds Station and for delivery of city centre segregated cycle routes (devolved Central Government funding);
  - City Connect 1, 2 and 3 segregated cycle routes (funded by the WYTF);
  - 'Grey to Green' schemes for Crown Point Road, Sovereign Street footbridge, Corn Exchange public realm and Meadow Lane greenspace (central government grant);
  - Leeds Station Platform 0 works and improvements on Princes Square (Network Rail/DfT);
  - Regent Street bridge renewal (WYTF/LCC/DfT); and
  - M621 Junctions 1 to 7 RIS scheme (funded and delivered by Highways England as mentioned above).
- 2.13 Detailed traffic modelling is being undertaken which demonstrates that the combination of schemes listed above (with the LCCP) enables the delivery of the vision and mitigates the impact of traffic displacement. The modelling exercise is ongoing, being refined to adapt to evolving designs and funding. Details of the modelling will be made publicly available as part of the Planning Application for Armley Gyratory.
- 2.14 Modelling shows that in essence, traffic flow reduces across the city centre river bridges and the Inner Ring Road (IRR) experiences a corresponding increase in traffic, both through Armley Gyratory and on the A58 to the west, as well as around the east side of the IRR including the John Smeaton viaduct (Inner Ring Road stage 7), where signal timings will be changed to facilitate the amended traffic patterns. The closure of Junction 2A westbound off-slip by Highways England, for road safety reasons, helps reduce traffic flows through Holbeck Moor, although the modelling suggests that some other roads in Holbeck such as Jack Lane and Globe Road will see an increase in traffic.
- 2.15 The modelling also suggests that there will be an average improvement in bus journey times, of 10% or more in both peak periods.

- 2.16 Development work on the LCCP is well advanced, with procurement activity focussing on a target substantial completion date on site for Armley Gyratory highway works of December 2022 with closure of City Square to all through traffic to follow shortly afterwards, subject to the ongoing procurement discussions and development of temporary traffic management plans. Some elements of the scheme such as replacement bridges, which require a longer design time and which are not essential to realise the traffic capacity improvements on 'day one,' are likely to follow on, with a slightly extended programme.
- 2.17 It is important to note that any references in this report to a scheme at City Square refer to the 'highways' project to reconfigure the roads to amend traffic, pedestrian and cycle movements along and across trafficked areas. There is a separate 'design competition' project reviewing the opportunities for delivering the world-class public space enabled by the roadspace reallocation, as per the previous reports to Executive Board. Further progress and decisions relating to the urban realm project will be the subject of subsequent reports.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 A key component of the LCCP is an upgrade to Armley Gyratory. Because of the scale and complexity of the scheme, its development has been progressed ahead of the remaining parts of the LCCP, some smaller elements of which are still being defined. It is important that momentum of the scheme development is maintained to maximise the opportunities for timely delivery thus unlocking the benefits which accrue from traffic removal in the city centre.
- 3.2 Although Armley Gyratory is a key enabler for the closure of City Square, and is beneficial for delivering new housing and other local developments, there are direct benefits for the local community, because at present the gyratory causes severance. The scheme is investing in enhanced walking and cycling facilities, through the provision of new or wider bridges with more accessible ramps, wider/ resurfaced footways/ cycleways, helping to better connect residents in New Wortley with the City Centre, Kirkstall Road and Whitehall Road (via the Monkbridge development). The landscaping will be improved to help personal security. The works presently include substantial structural works where the footways are narrowest under the railway bridges to provide a safer and more comfortable experience for vulnerable road users.
- 3.3 The scheme also addresses an existing road safety and delay problem, by signalling the existing 'give way' where Wellington Street enters the gyratory. In addition it reduces the weaving traffic problems northbound on the A58 which are a concern for drivers.

#### Armley Gyratory Design Amendments

- 3.4 Through 2020, the preferred option for Armley Gyratory has been modified by widening and realigning the existing circulatory whilst removing the 'cut-through' link from the central island. The impact on pedestrian and cycle connectivity has been mitigated through proposals to improve the existing footbridge across the south side of the gyratory and complete a better quality walking and (legal) cycle link towards Wellington Street alongside the eastern carriageway of the A58. The impact on active mode journey times was appraised and found to be minor, with some movements actually being quicker because of the removal of delay at the road crossings.

- 3.5 The new and upgraded pedestrian and cycle routes included in the proposed development will provide higher quality, more accessible routes around the junction. Existing pedestrian and cycle routes will be made safer and more pleasant with pruning and reshaping of existing trees, landscaping and footpath widening. This is complemented by improved crossing facilities, including the new signal-controlled pedestrian and cycling crossing across B6159 Wellington Road and also includes the replacement of the existing footbridges over the A643 Ingram Road and A58 Inner Ring Road, with a dedicated pedestrian and cycle bridges.
- 3.6 One of the key feedback from the residents of New Wortley was how the current gyratory is a barrier, 40% of the respondents wanted the new scheme to address poor pedestrian crossing provision. The proposed improvements helps to connect New Wortley with the City Centre therefore improving access to jobs, education, culture and shopping for this neighbourhood with low car ownership, and at same encouraging people to undertake short distance trips by active modes, which helps people's health and the environment.
- 3.7 The re-design, by reducing its effect on third parties and contaminated land, has brought the scheme down in cost by £15m-£20m, to £40.5m, ensuring that both Armley Gyratory and City Square can be fully funded from the LCCP in addition to the Infirmary Street Gateway, Meadow Lane (highways) and a contribution to Regent Street Bridge.

#### Construction Impacts and Mitigation

- 3.8 The various pressures on the highway network from highway construction, utility works and developer works continue to be managed by the Network Management team and overseen by the Planning for Growth Board. Lessons from implementation of Regent Street Bridge and the Headrow Gateway scheme are being fed into the work planning (especially in relation to bus operators and passengers), but significant disruption may prove unavoidable, especially during late 2021 and through 2022, because of the sheer scale of activity planned across the city centre network. The programme pressures are also likely to require some advance enabling works ahead of full approval by the Combined Authority, i.e. at financial risk, to help minimise disruption.
- 3.9 The design team will work closely with the Contractor and key stakeholders to plan appropriate, and adaptive, mitigation to manage the potential impact of the works on traffic disruption, bus service routing/bus stop locations and local businesses. These measures include:
- The use of advance warning signs on strategic routes into the city to inform of the works and advise alternative routing.
  - A positive and proactive communications strategy promoting alternative, sustainable travel options while maintaining awareness that Leeds is open for "business as usual;" and
  - Enhancing the collaborative approach between Leeds City Council, WYCA and bus operators to limit impact on services through the promotion of public transport usage which will, in turn, reduce numbers of vehicular traffic on the network.
- 3.10 Connecting Leeds and the design team will meet regularly with WYCA and bus operators to develop a mitigation package for the potential disruption to services

and routes during the works. The programme will allow for an overarching communications and delivery strategy, especially in light of potential impact of medium-term disruption, and build relationships with key internal and external stakeholders and managers of existing infrastructure and investment programmes to maximise collaborative working opportunities. The works planning will include any arrangements around the Christmas trading period, which are yet to be defined.

- 3.11 In addition, a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is under development which will keep track of traffic flow changes on the network, including potentially sensitive locations such as Holbeck, whilst the new Leeds UTMC Traffic Control Room in Civic will be equipped and staffed to disseminate information, and mitigate issues arising, especially for bus operations.
- 3.12 The UTMC team, responsible for the day-to-day management of traffic signals, will be reviewing signal timing plans and strategies across the city centre through 2021 and 2022 to help smooth the transitions between various work phases, and to maximise capacity on suitable diversion routes. This work will be funded from the LCCP or other suitable scheme budgets. Further consideration is being given to the renewal of ageing signal infrastructure and upgrading of signal detection equipment to maximise future network resilience. However, the costs associated with these measures are not presently budgeted for.
- 3.13 The effect of the schemes described above represent the biggest change in the city centre road network since the pedestrianisation of Briggate in the 1990's and creation of the Loop Road.

#### Funding and Business Cases

- 3.14 In regard to funding, since the council secured Outline Business Case (Gateway 1) approval from WYCA in 2016, development has progressed using the WYTF grant, with development costs agreed and available to the council via the formal funding agreements. Because Armley Gyratory was 'fast-tracked' ahead of City Square closure, and because elements of the LCCP have been moved to different delivery streams, an Outline Business Case was submitted to WYCA for the gyratory as a standalone scheme, but under the over-arching strategy of the LCCP as a whole. This OBC received approval from WYCA on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020. The Full Business Case will be for the modified option, and the submission is expected to be made in autumn 2021.
- 3.15 The OBC for City Square is programmed to be submitted during the summer in parallel with the public consultation exercise, to enable technical validation of the OBC by WYCA's appraisal team and progression through the assurance process. The results of the summer consultation will be fed into the process when they are available, and any adjustments or change in direction will be managed at that point. Delaying the submission of the OBC is not recommended, as this will place greater strain on the highway network during construction and possibly raise tender prices if the construction window is shortened.
- 3.16 Despite the substantial cost savings from the design amendments made to the Armley Gyratory design, there is still a funding gap for the proposed complementary schemes to support closure of City Square, resulting from the necessary prioritisation of Regent Street Bridge. The council is continuing to work with WYCA to identify and secure the remaining funding and this may require the work programming of these complementary schemes to 'flex' to capitalise on available funding. Securing the remaining funds is vital to deliver the optimal solution for the city, but the funding gap does not prevent taking Armley Gyratory and City Square through to implementation.

- 3.17 Project development funds have been released and the council and WYCA have signed a conditional funding agreement in May 2019 for the full allocated funds of £66.8m for the Leeds City Centre Package, which is being updated to £78.8m to include a £12m contribution towards Regent Street Bridge. This funding will be drawn down as each element passes the appropriate WYCA assurance stage. As each scheme comes forward from within the Leeds City Centre Package, the funding agreement will be appended with details of the amount drawn down from the total allocation.

### Environmental Impact

- 3.18 Given the effect of traffic displacement from the City Square scheme, the technical assessments being undertaken for the Armley Planning Application and Full Business Case have been specified to include a scenario with City Square closed. This will allow due regard to be given to any wider effects such as changes in noise and air pollution, in making a final decision to implement either or both schemes.
- 3.19 Some trees will need to be removed to accommodate the new gyratory alignment. Whilst the number of trees removed will be minimised as far as possible, wherever this cannot be avoided, three new trees will be planted for every one tree removed in accordance with current council practice. The new trees will be planted either at the gyratory or in the surrounding local community, dependent on the space available and the most suitable location for the betterment of the local residents. The project team will continue to work with LCC Landscape, Parks and Countryside teams as well as local ward members to identify most appropriate locations for off-site tree planting. We will also employ the services of Environment and Design Group team to engage with the local community and schools focusing on landscape design.

### Effect of COVID-19 on Travel Demand

- 3.20 Surveys suggest that businesses and employees are reconsidering the role of home working and use of technology, and there is some uncertainty as to how quickly traffic levels will return, and to what extent, with the current COVID-19 measures expected to be eased moving forward. It is not possible at this point to be definitive about the possible medium to long term consequences for transport planning. However, the basic premise of closing City Square and improving Armley Gyratory is unaffected, with the only query being to what extent additional highway capacity should be provided to mitigate traffic displacement.
- 3.21 Traffic counters have shown that the traffic flow through Armley during the current lockdown have remained broadly similar to pre-lockdown flows, whilst traffic flows are substantially down within the inner ring road. This appears to be because drivers find going through Armley the route of choice if congestion is not too severe. It is possible therefore that even in the event of longer term flow reductions across the city, the role of the IRR will remain vital and the Armley Gyratory scheme will still represent a worthwhile investment.
- 3.22 The actual medium to long term travel demand response will not be known for some time, and therefore given the above observations it is recommended to proceed with the proposed scheme on the current timeline.

## 4. Corporate considerations

### 4.1 Consultation and engagement

#### Armley Gyratory

- 4.1.1 The council carried out a public consultation exercise between February and April 2018, covering the A647 LPTIP corridor from Armley Gyratory to the boundary with Bradford, under the Connecting Leeds brand. This comprised of online information, social and print media and drop-in events in Armley, Bramley and Pudsey. The consultation asked for feedback on perceptions of the need for change and the principle of an improvement scheme.
- 4.1.2 In total, 265 responses were received via the council's Connecting Leeds website (<https://armleygyratory.commonplace.is/about>), by email, or by the return of completed questionnaires provided at public engagement events. 80% of respondents were dissatisfied with the existing Armley Gyratory, with concerns covering issues like congestion, road safety (especially weaving traffic), and pedestrian and cycle facilities.
- 4.1.3 Alongside this public consultation, the council has maintained ongoing dialogue with statutory bodies and non-statutory interest groups with regards to the Armley Gyratory proposals.
- 4.1.4 Ward members for Armley, Beeston and Holbeck, and Hunslet and Riverside, the three wards within which the scheme sits, and Little London and Woodhouse, received updates on the scheme commencing with a briefing note in February 2018 and again in July 2019. They were invited to a member-only session in advance of the public consultation drop-in events in 2018. A separate drop-in event was also held at St Matthew's Community Centre at the request of local ward members to open engagement with residents with a specific focus on the Armley Gyratory.
- 4.1.5 A second consultation, this time on the preliminary design was held between Monday 12th August and Monday 23rd September 2019. The consultation included both online and offline elements, and two further drop-in consultation events in September 2019. Both the website and the events showcased the proposals and enabled local stakeholders and the wider public to view and comment on the Proposed Development. The events provided more detailed information about the Proposed Development and explained how the proposals had evolved since the options consultation in 2018, including how feedback from the public had been considered and influenced the current design.
- 4.1.6 The consultation on the preliminary design received 333 responses with 50% being satisfied/very satisfied, and 35% being dissatisfied/very dissatisfied. 50% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the pedestrian and cycle routes. 48% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with other improvements proposed to pedestrian and cycle routes and crossings.
- 4.1.7 The Council also maintains regular engagement and discussion with adjacent landowners regarding the emerging proposals.
- 4.1.8 Because of the modifications made through 2020 to the preliminary design as consulted on during 2019, a round of engagement was held in March/April 2021, to update stakeholders and those involved in previous rounds of consultation as to the changes. Although the engagement has not explicitly sought feedback, there will be an opportunity to comment formally as part of the public consultation process

required once the Planning Application is submitted. The plan presented in the consultation is included in Appendix 1.

## City Square

- 4.1.9 Note the inclusion of the City Square scheme within various documents and Executive Board approvals, which have been or are being consulted upon, including those listed in Section 2, and explicitly within the Our Spaces Strategy, Armley Gyratory Preliminary Design Consultation (August to September 2019) and the Draft Leeds Transport Strategy (March 2021).
- 4.1.10 We are currently undertaking a targeted engagement exercise with key Stakeholders, and residents and businesses that are directly affected by the scheme. We are seeking comments on the proposals and to understand if there are any concerns regarding servicing and access to properties. The schematic plan of the proposals is included in Appendix 1. The ongoing dialogue includes the developers of City Square House.
- 4.1.11 An Executive Board report was approved on 18th March 2020 which provides an update to members on the proposals for City Square and sought approval to commission a Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)-led design competition to determine design options for the future public realm.
- 4.1.12 City Square has also formed part of the engagement discussion with regards the Our Spaces strategy which commenced in November 2018 and concluded in April 2019. Part of this consultation exercise sought the public's thoughts on the principle of closing City Square to general through traffic.
- 4.1.13 As the project progresses, a full communications and engagement plan will be developed. This will include public consultation and other engagement events related specifically to the proposals on City Square.
- 4.1.14 A comprehensive public engagement exercise will be undertaken in the summer following Local and Mayoral elections.
- 4.1.15 Ongoing dialogue is taking place with the developers of adjacent properties including City Square House.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 An EDCl screening for the proposals in this report is provided at Appendix 2 and this indicates that the issues set out in this report are unlikely to have negative equality, diversity/cohesion and integration impacts and that there is no need for a full assessment. At Armley Gyratory, the measures will be positive for those with mobility impairments, and improve personal security for those who feel more vulnerable. The improvements to air quality, most notably in the city centre where 'footfall' is high, will benefit everyone but especially those whose health is poor, and by enabling roadspace in the city centre to be reallocated to sustainable modes it will improve accessibility for all.

## **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The closure of City Square helps facilitate the Best City ambition by creating opportunity for a World Class public space, releasing highway for improved realm in other city centre locations such as Meadow Lane, improving the environment,

encouraging more city centre living, enabling investment, improving health outcomes through improving active travel facilities, and future-proofing the city centre for the arrival of key transport projects including mass transit and HS2.

#### Climate Emergency

- 4.3.2 The Council declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019. The modelling required for the Full Business Case and Planning Application will assess the City Centre Package's impact on the environment including noise, air quality and carbon dioxide emissions. The removal of traffic from the city centre is a key part of the aspiration to make the city centre a more liveable, walkable environment supporting sustainable living and moving around on foot, by bike or public transport, through better facilities, cleaner air and world-class open spaces. Reallocation of roadspace is required to achieve these aims.
- 4.3.3 It is a stated aim in the current draft Transport Strategy to remove traffic from the city centre, and the Armley Gyratory improvements (with the M621 RIS scheme) facilitate this. The draft Transport Strategy seeks to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to move towards the council's emission targets.

#### **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

- 4.4.1 Funding for the LCCP including Armley Gyratory will be obtained through the allocation of project grant in the West Yorkshire Plus Transport Fund. This funding is confirmed in the Funding Agreement between WYCA and LCC dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019.
- 4.4.2 Scheme development has involved a review of scheme options, assessing those options against scheme objectives and considering performance, environmental impact, buildability, cost, etc. to arrive at a preferred solution to be taken forward for engagement. Information on options was presented to WYCA.
- 4.4.3 Value for money is being assessed through the business case process, and, as Funder, WYCA will determine whether to invest in these schemes through to construction. As demonstrated in the 'Gateway 1' OBC submitted to WYCA in 2016, the value for money case for closing City Square looks weak based on traditional transport metrics. However, given that closing City Square is about enabling transformation of the city centre and not about reducing journey times, the strategic case is very strong; and this rationale was accepted when the 2016 OBC was approved by WYCA. A poor value for money Benefit to Cost Ratio (which cannot fully quantify all the wider benefits to the city and region), is expected when the City Square OBC is submitted later this year. Recent guidance from central government recognises that the strategic case should be given more weight in decision making in circumstances such as this (see the Green Book review <https://www.cbi.org.uk/articles/green-book-review-setting-a-strategic-approach-for-achieving-net-zero-and-levelling-up/>).

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

- 4.5.1 No third party land is required for the highway works at City Square as all proposed works are within the adopted highway and consequently can be delivered under the council's powers as the highway authority for Leeds.
- 4.5.2 The scheme requires Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to close it to general traffic. The package of TROs required will be presented for approval to the Chief Officer

(Highways & Transportation) by way of the Highways Board process subsequent to the approval of this report. Advertisement of these TROs will take place in accordance with statutory procedures, with objections being properly considered for each TRO proposed before amendments to / introduction of the relevant Orders is undertaken as required.

- 4.5.3 The City Square closure highways scheme does not require planning permission.
- 4.5.4 For Armley Gyratory, a planning application is required and is expected to be submitted in late summer/the autumn and it is anticipated that this could be determined by the Local Planning Authority (by January 2022).
- 4.5.5 An effective solution at Armley Gyratory cannot be delivered without acquiring land from third parties.
- 4.5.6 Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 authorises the Council to acquire by agreement any land for the benefit, improvement or development of the Council's area or for the purposes of any of the Council's functions under any enactment, notwithstanding that the land is not immediately required for such purposes.
- 4.5.7 Sections 239 and 240 of the Highways Act 1980 are the principal powers covering the acquisition of land for the construction of new highways and the improvement of existing highways. Section 240(2) of the Act authorises the Council to acquire compulsorily or by agreement any land which is required for use by the Council in connection with the construction or improvement of a highway. Section 246 authorises the acquisition of land for the mitigation of adverse effects arising from highway construction or improvement, Section 248 authorises the acquisition of land in advance of requirements (the Council may not need to rely on this if no land in advance is required), while section 249 relates to distance limits for land acquisition for various purposes, and section 250 authorises the creation of new rights (as well as the acquisition of existing rights). Sections 14 and 125 are the main relevant powers where an SRO is required.
- 4.5.8 For the Armley Gyratory improvement shown in Appendix 1, the council has identified the principal landowners across the area—five in number. Delivery of the highway capacity enhancements depends on land from only one party, National Grid, and discussions are on-going and we are comfortable in acquiring the land through negotiations.
- 4.5.9 Acquisition of the remaining land from the other four owners is required for delivery of the replacement footbridge across the A58(M). Discussions are well advanced. If required the programme can be adapted to allow an extended period of negotiation or if necessary compulsory purchase orders, without affecting the highways works programme. A provisional sum has been included for in the project budget to allow for compensatory payments associated with land acquisition.
- 4.5.10 Following appropriate acquisition of land, the gyratory proposals can be delivered using TROs. Should any circumstances arise where additional powers are needed for land acquisition or highways, these will be the subject of subsequent reports to and decisions by the Director of Development or Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation).
- 4.5.11 This report is subject to call-in.

## **4.6 Risk management**

- 4.6.1 The council has appointed the multi-disciplinary consultant AECOM, which is providing resource and expertise to lead on the preliminary design, business case

and planning application. AECOM has facilitated a number of risk workshops to date to identify project risks.

- 4.6.2 Council officers work closely with WYCA officers on scheme assessment and appraisal to increase assurance, reducing risk.
- 4.6.3 Construction procurement discussions include a particular focus on risk transfer.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 City Square will be a redefined and much improved multi-functional place that facilitates every day urban culture, enabled by a dramatic reduction in traffic flows through the square.
- 5.2 The Armley Gyratory project - a key component of the Leeds City Centre Package to realize the ambitions for City Square and the wider city centre—is also moving into a more detailed phase of planning, in readiness for implementation.
- 5.3 Executive Board approval is now sought for the designs in Appendix 1, noting the progression of the development work and intended implementation, subject to the outlined processes, for Armley Gyratory and City Square.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 Executive Board is recommended to:
  - a) In the context of previous decisions taken by Executive Board and outlined in this report approve the outline design for the closure of City Square to through traffic as per the plan in Appendix 1, including the indicated bus and taxi only restrictions, noting that there may be further adjustments to the design to respond to stakeholders' needs and the proposed public consultation, at the discretion of the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation);
  - b) Approve the preliminary design of Armley Gyratory as shown in Appendix 1, presented in the recent engagement, subject to any changes arising from Planning conditions or the detailed design process;
  - c) Note that City Square closure (highway works) and Armley Gyratory are to be fully funded from the WYTF;
  - d) Note the importance of the delivery of the Highways England M621 RIS scheme (Junctions 1 to 7) for the realisation of the city centre vision; and
  - e) Note that the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation) is responsible for the programme delivery, with a target completion date of December 2022.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

## Appendix 1 Scheme Plans

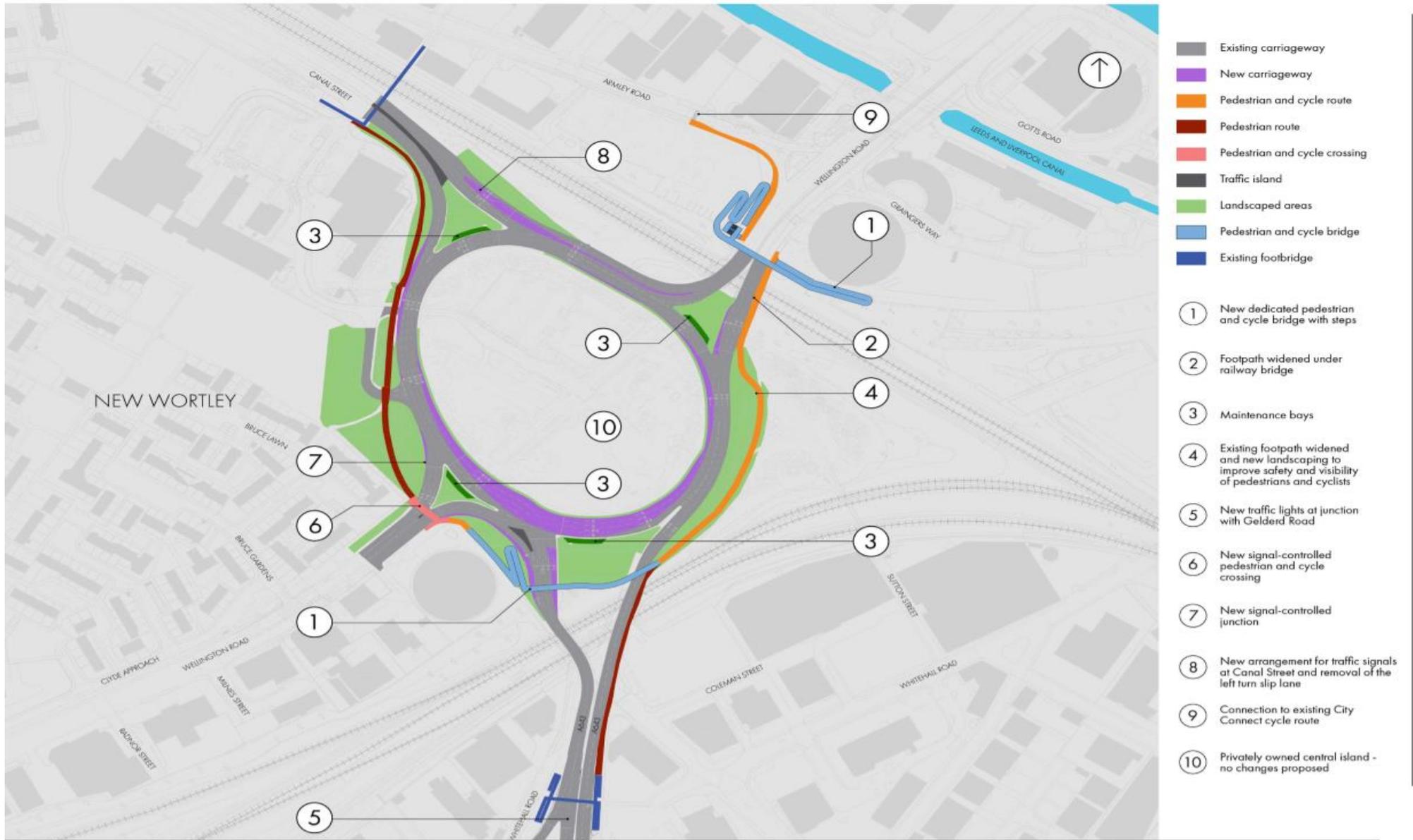
City Square Public Realm (Illustrative Concept Only – Design Competition Ongoing)



# City Square as Featured in the Our Spaces Draft Strategy Endorsed by Executive Board for Consultation



# Armley Gyratory – Engagement Plan



# City Square – Engagement Plan

