



Report of the Director of City Development

Executive Board

Date: 4th March 2009

Subject: Legible Leeds Project

Electoral Wards Affected:

City & Hunslet

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. It has been recognised that there is a need to improve the legibility of Leeds city centre. This means providing information that makes it easy to get into and out of the city centre and once there easy to find your way around. This will help to link together the different parts of the expanding city centre, make attractions better known and easier to find and to ensure that new developments become destinations that people are encouraged to move through and explore the city from.
2. Independent advisors, AIG Lacock Gullam, were appointed in 2007 to produce an Audit of the current wayfinding information in Leeds city centre, which led to the development of the Legible Leeds Wayfinding Strategy (LLWS). The LLWS document recommends what should be done to make Leeds city centre legible.
3. AIG Lacock Gullam are currently developing a new city centre walking map and on-street wayfinding system.
4. The development of a new city centre walking map will be funded this financial year and a prototype map will be ready for testing in Spring 2009.
5. Funding of £1.2 million (combination of LCC and Yorkshire Forward match funding) has been identified to carry out the installation of the on-street wayfinding system.
6. Members are asked to approve in principle that officers proceed to working up a detailed design and costed programme of works for the phased implementation of a new contemporary on-street wayfinding system, the first phase being in the central retail area.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 To advise Members of the:

- need for significant investment in the Legible Leeds city centre's pedestrian wayfinding system (i.e. integrated map units and fingerpost information).
- planned expenditure in financial year 2009-2010 of £1.2 million (consisting of £600,000 Leeds City Council funding and £600,000 of Yorkshire Forward funding) on the Legible Leeds project, specifically the phased implementation of the city centre on-street pedestrian wayfinding scheme.
- requirement of future investment in the on-going maintenance of the resultant mapping and signage system, which will be met from existing resources.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 For the city centre to become legible it must be easy to get into *and* out of, and once there, easy to find your way around.

2.2 This is affected by factors relating to the visitor, such as their own wayfinding ability and level of previous knowledge of the city centre, but also the availability of up-to-date city centre maps and directional signage in appropriate locations.

2.3 It was first identified at the City Centre Retail Group that the wayfinding information in the city centre should be improved. Members, TQD Ltd (Caddick's and Land Securities) for Trinity Leeds and Hammerson's and Town Centre Securities for Eastgate Quarter, offered a sum of £25,000 (£12,500 each) to progress the work.

2.4 This was to ensure that new large retail developments, particularly Eastgate Quarter and Trinity Leeds, become an integral part of the city centre so that the core retail offer expands rather than shifts. Also that visitors to the new retail developments are encouraged to explore the rest of the city centre because the route there and back again is clearly mapped and signed.

2.5 Further aims identified for the Legibility project include that:

- the city centre has increased visitor numbers and a good rate of repeat visits;
- awareness of and numbers of visitors to cultural attractions, particularly the new City Museum and the Royal Armouries, are increased;
- benefits of the forthcoming Arena being located in the city centre are maximised;
- continued investment in the city centre to secure further growth in employment is encouraged and supported.

2.6 Under the guidance of a inter-disciplinary officer steering group independent advisors, AIG Lacock Gullam, were commissioned to carry out a three Phase project. Phase one was to produce an Audit of the current wayfinding information in Leeds city centre. This informed Phase two, the development of the draft Legible Leeds Wayfinding Strategy (LLWS). The LLWS recommends the ways in which the city centre could improve access, perception, and wayfinding information to become legible.

- 2.7 The focus of the research was primarily on the existing and proposed city centre retail area, but also included transport interchanges, car parks and the waterfront.
- 2.8 The draft LLWS has been out to consultation with key city centre stakeholders, including retail developers, Yorkshire Forward, Leeds Civic Trust, University of Leeds, Aire Action Leeds and various Leeds City Council departments. The feedback has generally been positive and is currently being included in the document ready to be finalised by the end of this financial year.
- 2.9 The LLWS makes a number of recommendations to improve the legibility of the city centre within three key objectives:
- 1. Welcoming people to Leeds** – improving gateways, providing a consistent image of the city and making sure people’s first impression is a full, positive picture.
 - 2. Connecting places** – integrating new developments, removing physical barriers, creating a network of pedestrian routes through the whole of the city.
 - 3. Making movement easy** – linking transport, giving wayfinding information where it’s needed and naming places to make areas easier to find.
- 2.10 AIG Lacock Gullam are currently working on Phase three, the development of a new city centre walking map and on-street wayfinding system, which will begin to put the LLWS ‘making movement easy’ recommendations into action.
- 2.11 Funding of £30,000 has been secured from the West Yorkshire Tourism Partnership (WYTP), which has allowed the development of a new city centre walking map and complimentary ‘how to’ toolkit for the West Yorkshire region. The prototype city centre walking map will be ready for testing in Spring 2009.
- 2.12 AIG Lacock Gullam are also working on some of the preparation work that will scientifically advise how and where the on-street wayfinding system should be installed. This is identifying the most popular pedestrian routes and, within these, the most appropriate locations for the signs and maps to be positioned. They will provide options for the design and materials of the mapping units and fingerposts.

3.0 Main Considerations

3.1 The City Centre and Legibility

- 3.1.1 The city centre is crucial to both Leeds City Council’s aspirations to ‘go up a league’ and to ‘narrowing the gap’:
- Nearly a third of the city’s employees work in the city centre; the retail and restaurant sectors provide easy to access and often flexible employment to residents living within the ‘rim’ of the city centre;
 - In 2003/4 49% of residents visited Leeds once a week or more and 33% visited 1-3 times a month. 68% of visitors came to Leeds for shopping, with 59% visiting at least 1-3 times a week. The city centre is a resource for residents and increasingly the wider city region;
 - Over 112,000 pedestrians enter the retail area weekdays, 139,000 on a Saturday.
- 3.1.2 Attractions and opportunities within the city centre draw a significant level of footfall from shoppers, visitors, workers and residents alike. According to the Legible Leeds

Audit, the current wayfinding signage is not making the most of the large volume of people moving around the city centre at any one time.

- 3.1.3 The Audit identified that the city centre's pockets of excellence are not connected together by clear pedestrian routes or information. The shopping areas do not link with the cultural destinations. The waterfront is hidden away and the waterside pathways are disjointed. The viaduct to the south and inner ring road to the north form strong physical barriers that deter pedestrians walking into the city centre.
- 3.1.4 By improving on-street pedestrian signage, creating maps designed for people on foot and producing visitor information that links with the on-street information, visitors will be encouraged to explore further than they otherwise would have. This is beneficial to the visitor as they have a positive experience of the city centre encouraging repeat visits and beneficial to the destinations as they receive increased visitor numbers.
- 3.1.5 The importance of good legibility is not unique to Leeds city centre. Considered in a competitive context to other key cities, such as Bristol, Sheffield, Glasgow, Liverpool and Southampton, Leeds is currently lagging behind.
- 3.1.6 Gaining a reputation for a successful legibility scheme is invaluable for raising Leeds' profile to go up a league as a city and become internationally competitive.

3.2 The Public Realm and Legibility

- 3.2.1 The delivery of a successful legible city is closely linked to the quality of the public realm. Up-to-date, clear and easy to use on-street wayfinding information is a complementary layer of a high quality public realm, offering interpretation and information when needed.
- 3.2.2 Sign clutter and street clutter exists on many pedestrian routes in Leeds city centre. Clutter creates 'visual noise' that reduces the effectiveness of on-street information, and affects the overall perception and enjoyment of the area. Therefore prior to putting in further pedestrian signage, a de-cluttering process is underway to remove unnecessary street clutter.

3.3 Street names and road signage

- 3.3.1 Street name signs are included in the family of wayfinding directional signage. The Legible Leeds Audit identified that city centre's street name signs are not consistent in style or positioning. Some are vandalised, obscured by vegetation or look worn and faded. Over the years different systems and styles have been used and do not support the idea of a cohesive Leeds city centre area.
- 3.3.2 Street name plate upgrading and co-ordination and modifications to highway signage are considered to be part of the overall project, and will primarily be funded through yearly maintenance budgets.

3.4 The City Centre and Current Condition On-Street Wayfinding

- 3.4.1 Leeds' current wayfinding information, consisting of city maps in 33 locations and a system of fingerposts in 70 locations, was installed incrementally through the mid 1990's. The reactive, ad hoc approach to the installation has resulted in a signage and mapping provision that is generally inconsistent and unclear.

- 3.4.2 The Legible Leeds Audit observed that the fingerposts, although providing information for people on foot were inconsistent in sign positioning and location, destinations included on the signs, destination names used on the signs and symbols used. In addition the fingerposts do not indicate the length of time it will take to walk to the named destination.
- 3.4.3 The Audit found that the existing city centre on-street maps were designed with motorists rather than pedestrians in mind. For example they do not show walking routes through the Victoria Quarter and the shopping centres.
- 3.4.4 The style and physical condition is increasingly tired and dated, especially in comparison to the improved public realm (as described in 3.2), and does not support the aspiration for Leeds to compete at a European level.

3.5 **The City Centre and Proposed Future for On-Street Wayfinding**

- 3.5.1 The proposal is to remove the city centres' existing uncoordinated wayfinding information and replace it with a single unified system.
- 3.5.2 AIG Lacock Gullam have already successfully delivered this type of work in various other key cities. With their guidance a single strategy for mapping, sign position and preferred routes will be implemented. The approach will allow the system to be logically extended in the future as required.
- 3.5.3 The removal of conflicting pedestrian signage and clutter will result in a clear and reliable wayfinding system.
- 3.5.4 The aspiration is to install bespoke location specific mapping units, with integrated 'fingerpost' information. Stand alone fingerposts will also be installed where necessary.
- 3.5.5 The implementation of the system will be carried out in a number of phases, for example firstly the central retail core followed by the waterfront. The actual number of phases will be determined once further work has been carried out on the specific 'Leeds' design and associated costings.
- 3.5.6 The intention is to prioritise the central retail core for the first phase of implementation.
- 3.5.7 A number of influential factors regarding the design of the future on-street wayfinding signage will have to be decided. These will determine what can feasibly be implemented in the first phase within the specified budget of £1.2 million (see Appendix 1 for examples from other key cities). These decisions include the:
- number of on-street map and signage locations required.
 - materials and design of the on-street wayfinding signage system.
 - quality of materials used, options include vitreous enamel (baked glass), stainless steel and/or glass.
 - flexibility of the design to allow future change of information
 - inclusion of various additional components required such as LED lighting, clocks and real time transport information.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 The intention to improve the legibility of Leeds city centre through, in the first instance, the installation of a contemporary up-to-date on-street wayfinding system supports a number of strategies for the city. These include the Council Plan, the Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020, the Leeds City Centre Strategic Plan 2006 to 2010, Renaissance Leeds Delivery Plan 2007-2009 and the Leeds City Centre 2020 Vision Prospectus.
- 4.2 The project supports the Council's Green Strategy and the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Plan as it will encourage and promote walking over using transport.
- 4.3 The proposals are in line with the Council's core values to put customers first, looking after Leeds and treat people fairly. The design will consider, and address where appropriate, the needs of the disabled so improving accessibility for all in the city centre.

5.0 Resource Implications

- 5.1 £1.2million LCC funding has recently been injected into the Capital Programme for 'City Centre Upgrade Programme' (13328) and is subject to approval in February 2009 by Executive Board and Full Council for spend in financial year 2009/10.
- 5.2 On 3 February 2009, Yorkshire Forward (YF) agreed to match fund the above LCC commitment and contribute an additional £1.2million for the financial year 2009/10.
- 5.3 At the 4 March 2009 Executive Board meeting, Design and Cost report 'Refurbishment of Kirkgate and Bond Street, Leeds City Centre – Capital Scheme Number 14838/000/000' will seek approval to inject YF's contribution of £1.2million into the City Development Capital Programme (scheme 13328).
- 5.4 If approved, of the total £2.4million that will become available it is proposed that £1.2million (£600,000 LCC and £600,000 YF) is spent on implementing the first phase of Leeds city centre's on-street wayfinding system.
- 5.5 Investment for future phases will have to be sought and secured from further sources, including future LCC capital programme, the regional development agency, the private sector and large city centre developers.
- 5.6 There will be future revenue implications for the on-going maintenance of the wayfinding system, which it is anticipated will be met from City Centre Management's enhancement budget.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are asked to:
- i. note the contents of this report;
 - ii. agree to the principle of the phased implementation of a new contemporary on-street wayfinding system, the first phase focusing on the central retail area, as indicated in this report;
 - iii. request officers to work up a detailed design and costed programme of works, and progress funding proposals to a total cost of £1.2million.

7.0 Background Papers

- 7.1 Executive Board report “Proposed Refurbishment Of The City Centre Public Realm” dated 11th September 2007
- 7.2 CDD report “Leeds City Centre Retail – Legibility Study” dated 30th April 2008
- 7.3 CDD report “Legible Leeds Project” dated 17th September 2008
- 7.4 CLT report “Legible Leeds Project” dated 21st October 2008
- 7.5 Leeds City Centre Strategic Plan 2006 to 2010
- 7.6 Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020
- 7.7 Renaissance Leeds Delivery Plan 2007-2009
- 7.8 The Council’s Green Strategy
- 7.10 Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 to 2011
- 7.13 Leeds City Centre 2020 Vision Prospectus
- 7.14 Legible Leeds Audit Findings, Observations and Insights May 2009
- 7.15 Legible Leeds Wayfinding Strategy August 2008