



# Heart of Leicester Plan

EDTCE Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 06/11/2024

Lead director: Andrew Smith: Director of Planning,  
Development and Transportation

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## **Useful information**

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Andrew Smith
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- Report version number: 1

### **1. Summary**

The city centre is key to the local economy and provides a central hub for retailing, services, facilities, visitor attractions and is developing as a place to live and a neighbourhood in its own right. Its health and continued development is fundamental to the fortunes of the city as a whole.

A 'Heart of Leicester' plan is being developed to consider the range of issues facing the city centre area and potential priorities for delivering improvements over the next ten years.

Engagement is taking place with a range of stakeholders and the views of the Scrutiny Commission members are sought.

A presentation will be provided at the Scrutiny Commission meeting to inform a discussion.

### **2. Recommendation to scrutiny**

The Scrutiny Commission is invited to consider issues and opportunities facing the city centre area both now and over the coming years and contribute their thoughts and ideas to inform the development of a 'Heart of Leicester' Plan.

### **3. Detailed report**

#### **Background**

The future of our city centre is fundamental to the fortunes of the city as a whole. It is the centre for shopping and work, a hub for culture, leisure, sport and education, and the provider of essential services to everyone in Leicester. It is also our shop window for visitors and to those considering investing in our city.

However as with all city centres and towns across the country, Leicester city centre has faced constant challenges including:

- Potential wholesale clearance in the Loseby Lane and St Martin's areas back in the 1980s
- The recent impacts of Covid including accelerated changes in shopping habits to more online purchasing and the reduction in working from offices, reducing spend in city centres
- Competition, particularly from out of town retailing at Fosse Park
- The closure of household name brands such as M & S
- The pressure for more centrally located homes

- The decline of traditional industries resulting in less footfall and derelict sites
- Addressing transportation needs and related issues such as air quality
- Management and maintenance of the centre, including anti-social behaviour and 'street lifestyles'

## **Previous Support and Investment**

The city centre and adjacent areas has received substantial support from the council and its partners/funders over many years to bring about substantial improvement related to its retail function, transportation, public realm and environmental improvement, development of new homes and workspaces and education and learning provision, leisure and tourism related development and events.

The following provides examples of some of the support and investment (including partner, private investor and grant funding) that has contributed to the continued development of the city centre and reinforced its central role in supporting the economy of the city and providing central facilities and services for city residents:

- Over 2,000 new student, rental and family homes and new schools delivered at Waterside regeneration area with over £300m of private sector investment.
- Housing development in the central area has grown the city population from 5,000 in 2004 to 22,000 in 2022 – leading to many more construction activity and related employment, and new local consumers and workers living in the centre
- New creative, financial services and technology workspaces delivered by the council using Government funding that will create over 1,000 new jobs centrally
- Investment in university and college campuses e.g. DMU Mill Lane and Freemans Common UoL schemes
- Investment in new facilities at UHL Trust's LRI hospital
- Private investment in new retail and leisure in the centre e.g. Highcross and St Martin's Square. Supported by council investment in 84 new shopfronts/pavement cafes and restaurants, e.g. Granby Street
- New and improved cultural and tourism centres such as KRIII visitor centre and schemes nearing completion for a new interactive Roman Museum at Jewry Wall and Heritage and Learning Centre at Leicester Cathedral
- Success of our sporting clubs and investment in their facilities e.g. Mattioli Arena and new hotel and fan Zone at Tigers. Planned LCFC stadium expansion
- New hotels e.g. Waterside, Welford Road, Peacock Lane
- Over 300 events per year and over 150 high quality street art murals
- 134 new green electric buses (50% of city fleet), two new bus stations, new bus shelters/stops and Real Time Information.
- Rail Station redevelopment underway
- New public realm, improving streets and creating new public squares such as Jubilee Square and Green Dragon Square.
- Creating the largest Pedestrian Priority Zone for safe cycling and walking in the country
- Quality Mark for City Council car parks
- Investing in the built heritage including Greyfriars and Churchgate Heritage Action Zones with over 100 buildings restored
- Over 300 Story of Leicester heritage panels
- Purple Flag accreditation for a safe and thriving city centre at night

- Project Harmony led by community safety, including the police to tackle ASB hotspots and link to housing support services

## Plan Development

The plan was initially conceived as a city centre plan but it was felt that it should reflect the key role the centre plays for all communities and residents as a place to live and neighbourhood in its own right, a place of work and a place to visit for people living across the city and beyond. Consequently, the emerging plan has been titled 'Heart of Leicester' Plan.

Engagement has been ongoing with the council's internal services and lead members and with external stakeholders including business groups, retailers and developers for example.

Three spatial levels of plan focus are envisaged for those that increasingly live in the centre itself, those that live across the city, and those that live in the wider region:

- An exciting new **neighbourhood** and place to live and work
- An accessible hub for work, shopping and leisure **for everyone in the city**
- A thriving and well connected **regional centre**

A number of priorities has emerged from stakeholder discussions to date and an interconnected set of themes is proposed as follows:

- **Sustainable Neighbourhood:** Highlighting the growing role and importance the centre and adjacent areas such as Waterside have as a place to live for people
- **Working and Learning Hub:** Highlighting the need to provide new centrally located jobs alongside homes and build on the recent investment in new workspaces. Also the important role of the universities and colleges with over 45,00 students
- **Thriving Retail:** Recognising the continued importance of the centre to provide the city's main retail provision, acknowledging the change in retail trends.
- **Sporting and Cultural City:** Recognising the important role of sport, culture, events and tourism investment for city residents and in attracting visitors
- **Connected Centre:** Highlighting the substantial investment in bus services, cycling and walking and expanding the range of travel options as an alternative to car use
- **Beautiful, Green and Historic Place:** Recognising the rich built heritage and improvement in the public realm supporting continued investment in the centre
- **Welcoming Place:** Acknowledging the importance of a well managed and safe and well maintained centre

The revised Market scheme will be a key investment in the centre, supporting retailing and events, that will be subject to consultation, and once finalised the final scheme proposals will be included in the plan.

Once stakeholder engagement has completed a final version of the 'Heart of Leicester' Plan will be published and promoted through the council's web site. This is expected to be published early next year will set out the challenges faced by the centre and planned priorities for improvement and investment over the coming ten years. This will include activity involving, or led by, partners and also investment from the private and voluntary sectors.

The plan will be used as a means to highlight priority actions and as a promotional tool for attracting partner and private and grant (including Government) funding investments. To this extent it is a living document and can be updated as appropriate.

The Scrutiny Commission will receive a presentation on current issues and opportunities and will be invited for their thoughts on what they feel should be included in the plan.

#### **4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications**

##### **4.1 Financial Implications**

The Heart of Leicester Plan sets out some key themes for the future development of the city, as well as examples of recent successes. Any future schemes related to the plan would require appropriate funding and would require the usual City Council approvals before commencing

Signed: Jade Draper, Principal Accountant

Dated: 21/10/2024

##### **4.2 Legal Implications**

Legal can advise and support where necessary in the creation of the Heart of Leicester Plan and can advise on the implications and ongoing transactions or matters arising out of any such plan.

Signed: Zoe Iliffe, Principal Lawyer (Property, Highways & Planning)

Dated: 21/10/24

##### **4.3 Equalities Implications**

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 also requires that reasonable adjustments be made so that disabled people are not excluded from places that serve the public, including publicly accessible open spaces. This duty is on-going and anticipatory and, therefore, reasonable and proportionate steps to overcome barriers which may impede people with different kinds of disabilities.

There are no direct equalities implications arising from the report recommendations as the report is for consideration, rather than decision. However, the future and on-going approach to city centre accessibility will have equalities implications. The report outlines intentions to

improve– it is important as part of this to consider the needs of people with a range of different disabilities and impairment needs (for example, those with dementia, visual impairments, mental health conditions, neuro diverse conditions such as autism, learning disabilities and so on) in addition to older people and those with the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity. It is vitally important that less visible disabilities are taken into account, as they can pose just as much of a barrier as a physical disability.

Accessible and inclusive design relating to highway and transport schemes in an around the City Centre will support the general aims of the PSED and will be beneficial particularly in removing barriers to participation in public life. Ongoing engagement and consultation with key service user groups, disability groups and organisations is a vital aspect of ensuring that an inclusive approach which is consistent with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 is taken. It may be the case that an Equality Impact Assessment is required to develop the proposal in order to ensure that the possible impacts across all protected characteristics are taken into account.

Signed: Surinder Singh

Dated: 18 October 2024

#### **4.4 Climate Emergency Implications**

Following the council's declaration of a climate emergency and ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions for the council and the city, the council has a key role to play in taking a lead on tackling carbon emissions and climate adaptation within the city. It recently adopted the Climate Ready Leicester Plan including an updated strategy and a new programme of actions.

The city centre is a major source of emissions within Leicester, including from homes, businesses, transport, waste and consumption, and the impacts of climate change are among the range of threats facing the area, including flooding, extreme weather and heatwaves. The development of the Heart of Leicester Plan therefore presents a vital opportunity to encourage and enable climate action in this part of the city.

As such, further development of the plan needs to have regard to the council's strategy for achieving a Climate Ready Leicester. This includes consideration of all opportunities to embed action on the climate emergency within each of the emerging themes identified. This should also include highlighting the co-benefits of climate action for the city, such as financial savings, increased adaptation, improved transport links, health benefits and economic opportunities.

Signed: Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer

Dated: 22 October 2024

#### **4.5 Other Implications**

**None**

#### **5. Background information and other papers**

None

#### **6. Summary of appendices:**

None