

Executive Decision Report

Economic Action Plan Projects - Access Improvement Works at Jewry Wall Museum

Decision to be taken by: City Mayor

Decision to be taken on: 8 September 2016

Lead director: Mike Dalzell



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Abbey
- Report author: Sarah Levitt
- Author contact details: 0116 454 3521
- Report version number: Draft V1

1. Summary

This report seeks approval to deliver a new walkway access, terrace and adjacent path improvements at Jewry Wall / Vaughan College at an estimated cost of £950k; and to procure a co-ordinated design proposal for the refurbishment of the rest of the complex at an estimated cost of £193k. The total cost is hence £1.143m, to be funded by resources set aside for the Economic Action Plan.

The scheme needs to secure planning permission, scheduled monument consent and listed building consent. The programme forecasts a start on site in early 2017 and completion in late summer 2017.

See Appendix 1 for walkway designs.

2. Recommendations

To approve the following from resources set aside for the Economic Action Plan and to add the scheme to the capital programme:

- Deliver a new walkway access, terrace and improvements to paths running around the edge of the site at an estimated cost of £950k
- Procure a co-ordinated design proposal for the refurbishment of the rest of the complex at an estimated cost of £193k.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

In 2015 Leicester City Council purchased the empty Vaughan College building from the University of Leicester. The council had been considering how to improve disabled access to Jewry Wall Museum and to raise awareness of the Jewry Wall site generally as part of Connecting Leicester. The acquisition enabled the current proposals to be developed.

External fascias have already been painted and the building has been cleaned. Other works to the external baths site are scheduled in support of this walkway project including repairs and improvements to the existing paths in the grounds and for new interpretation material. This is being carried out in conjunction with the Friends of Jewry Wall group.

This project represents the next phase of improvements. Ultimately, the aim is to create a major visitor attraction at the complex. Jewry Wall itself is of national importance, one of the tallest surviving roman structures in the UK, and the museum collections are testimony to a century of archaeology in a significant Roman settlement. The Wall's importance is reflected by its designation as a scheduled ancient monument. Discussions on the Council's proposals with Heritage England are currently ongoing.

Detailed feasibility work was carried out on the walkway, including archaeological excavations,

before plans were finalised. The project will deliver:

- A new walkway from St Nicholas Church to the old Vaughan College terrace, linking to the city centre and offering better access and views
- Enhanced presentation and interpretation of the building and external site
- Improvement of St Nicholas path running behind Jewry Wall to Welles St

Benefits of a new walkway access, terrace and adjacent path improvements:

- Draws people across busy road from Jubilee Square and creates an exciting viewing point for Jewry Wall and baths site, helping to deliver the Connecting Leicester vision.
- Raises awareness of this most ancient part of historic Leicester.
- Creates a symbolic and attractive gateway to the waterside regeneration area.
- Enhances views of the complex and encourages visitors
- Improves the current access stairwell that is dark and unwelcoming
- Enables much better access to the museum, especially for disabled users. Current disabled access is via Welles St round the back of the building.

Options Considered

Do Nothing : Improving access to Jewry Wall Museum has been a long standing priority and the current situation is a barrier that has held back progress on developing the museum site and realising its full potential for the city.

Alternative Access Solutions : Detailed work was commissioned as part of the Connecting Leicester project to identify the best way of improving access. Options included a simple platform lift from pavement to site. However any lift like this would impinge on the existing archaeology and would be complex and expensive as a result. In total the feasibility study reviewed 13 different options.

Preferred Solution : The preferred solution has much greater impact for all visitors. It is also much less intrusive on the existing archaeology since it can reuse the foundations of the old Harvey Walk footbridge.

Benefits of developing plans to refurbish the museum and the rest of the complex.

- Although the quality of exhibits is outstanding, Jewry Wall Museum has not been redisplayed for many years and looks tired, especially in comparison with the King Richard III visitor centre. Many recent discoveries are not displayed, including much of the archaeology discovered when Highcross was built.
- Creating a high quality visitor attraction to tell the story of the Romans in Leicester involves background research into the collections, consultation, and the development of interpretation, concept designs, then detailed designs. This is work for specialists.
- Refurbishing the whole complex includes sensitive design of all the areas of what is an important listed building and requires a specialist architect company.
- The plans will be developed to a level of detail sufficient for an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

4. Details of Scrutiny

Presented to Heritage, Culture, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission 31 March 2016.
Scheme was supported.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The estimated £1.143m cost of the proposed works and design proposal can be funded from resources set aside for the Economic Action Plan.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

5.2 Legal implications

5.2.1. As outlined in the report, the site is designated as a scheduled ancient monument and accordingly the Council will have to obtain scheduled monument consent as well as obtaining planning and other consents required for the development. In addition, any adjoining landowners who may be affected by the proposed works should also be consulted as part of the planning/consent process.

John McIvor, Principal Lawyer, ext. 37-1409

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

5.3.1 Improving pedestrian access to the Jewry Wall Museum will support more sustainable forms of transport and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team (x372251)

5.4 Equalities Implications

The proposal to deliver a new walkway access, terrace and adjacent path improvements at Jewry Wall / Vaughan College that include improvements to the current access stairwell will enable better access to the museum, especially for disabled users. Improving path surfaces will benefit people with pushchairs as well as older people and wheelchair users. Carefully planned and maintained access improvements can help attract new audiences and improve the visitor experience for people from across all protected characteristics.

Equalities Officer Surinder Singh Tel 37 4148

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

6. Background information and other papers:

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1 Design and Access Statement

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

Yes

10. If a key decision please explain reason

Impact of scheme and financial value of project.