

# Executive Decision Report

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## **Connecting Leicester Street Schemes – St Nicholas Circle**

Decision to be taken by: City Mayor

Decision to be taken on: 16 July 2014

Lead director: Andrew L Smith

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**City Mayor**

## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Castle
- Report author: Satbir Kaur
- Author contact details: 37 2855
- Report version number: 1.0

### 1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to the St Nicholas Circle improvement scheme, as part of the Connecting Leicester programme within the Economic Action Plan.

### 2. Recommendations

The City Mayor is asked to:

1. Approve commencement of highway improvements on St Nicholas Circle and Southgates at an estimated cost of £1.737m, funded from resources set aside for the Economic Action Plan.
2. Add the scheme to the capital programme.

### 3. Supporting information including options considered:

#### Background

The St Nicholas Circle project forms part of a wider 'Connecting Leicester' vision, which seeks to substantially enhance the City Centre and promote its economic prosperity and growth through the creation of major improvements to public realm and better pedestrian connectivity.

The series of improvements around St Nicholas Circle are aimed at improving connectivity between important areas either side of the Southgates underpass. The study area includes St Nicholas Circle, A594 Vaughan Way/Highcross Street and the junctions in between. The proposed highway and public realm improvements are centred on St Nicholas Circle, entry to Castle Street, Harvey Walk, Jewry Wall Museum and Castle Gardens (collectively known as 'improvements at St Nicholas Circle'). The improvements at St Nicholas Circle are considered central to the delivery of some of the economic priorities set out in the Leicester Economic Action Plan (2012 to 2020) and the core objectives of Connecting Leicester.

The Action Plan sets out why reconnecting the historic heart of the city (between the market, Guildhall, the castle and Jewry Wall) represents a tremendous opportunity to attract more people into the city centre in terms of tourism, shopping and investment. The improvements are aimed at improving civic space and promoting the conservation, enhancement, sensitive use and management of the city's historic and cultural assets. It specifically aligns with 'The Thriving City Centre' Priority. The Economic Action Plan also states 'the value of the city centre as a whole to investors, visitors and residents

can be made much greater by connecting the strengths of Highcross and connected retail areas, the historic city extending from the Market to the Castle, the Cultural Quarter and centres of business activity'. This scheme forms part of the Phase 2 Projects of the Economic Action Plan (November 2012 EAP report).

The design has been developed through an open and inclusive stakeholder engagement process. The design has also evolved through design checks, road safety audits and officer involvement.

The proposed improvements are aimed at reducing the dominance of the road through removal of some of the carriageways, widening and resurfacing of the pavements and tree planting. Pedestrian crossings will be improved. The following lists the key features of the design:

- Reduced carriageway width (on the south side of St Nicholas Circle **only**, between Southgates and to a point approximately 55m west of the pedestrian crossing adjacent to Castle Park) to allow a segregated footway/cycleway on the south side of St Nicholas Circle.
- Footway/cycleway on the northern side of St Nicholas Circle.
- The provision of wider crossings to facilitate pedestrian and cycle desire lines.
- Traffic calming features to reduce entry speeds on Holy Bones, Castle Street and Talbot Lane.
- An additional coach stop on the north side of Peacock Lane.
- Demolition of Harvey Walk. Provision of an at-grade pedestrian and cycle route approximately in-line with Harvey Walk; including controlled toucan crossings on both sides of St Nicholas Circle.
- Planting/landscaping scheme over the underpass and on areas where there is adequate footway width
- Removal of the gantries subject to providing adequate signage by other methods. General de-cluttering of signs

In essence the project will provide:

- An environment that will attract new investment to the city centre.
- An increase in land and property values.
- An enhanced image and confidence in the city.
- A catalyst for regeneration.
- Increase in footfall, visitors and retail spend.

### Engagement

A public consultation on Connecting Leicester was carried out in August/September 2012 which gave an opportunity for people to comment on the proposals for the city centre. Overall the proposals for the city centre were supported by the general public.

We have also carried out a stakeholder engagement exercise as summarised in **Appendix A**. Discussions have taken place with the following groups:

- Ward Councillors.
- Cycle City Workshop.
- Local Access Forum.
- St Nicholas Circle Church.
- Holiday Inn.
- NCP.
- IDAP.

- Emergency Services.
- English Heritage.
- Bus Operators Group.

#### **4. Details of Scrutiny**

15<sup>th</sup> October 2012 - Scrutiny Committee (Special Connecting Leicester Meeting)

#### **5. Financial, legal and other implications**

##### 5.1 Financial implications

The expected costs of £1.737m can be funded from resources set aside for the Economic Action Plan.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

##### 5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications  
Sarah Khawaja Principal Solicitor (Regulatory & Property)

##### 5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

No climate change implications

##### 5.4 Equality Impact Assessment

The equality impacts of the scheme and mitigating actions have been considered as part of the development of the scheme and an EIA has been produced.

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

Planning applications will have to be submitted to deliver some elements of the scheme and a highway extinguishment will be required to close Harvey Walk. Some elements of the scheme will also require agreement with private landowners.

#### **6. Background information and other papers:**

None

**7. Summary of appendices:**

None

**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**

Spending of over £1m is to be committed on a scheme that has not been specifically authorised by Council.