

Cabinet Meeting

16 September 2015

Report title	City Centre Connected Places (Public Realm)	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds City Economy	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Keren Jones, City Economy	
Originating service	City Development	
Accountable employee(s)	Ruth Taylor Tel Email	Development and Regeneration Officer 01902 555635 ruth.taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board	1 September 2015

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the principles of the Connected Places strategy, and the development of the delivery plan.
2. Approve the development of the early win work streams identified for Molineux and links between Springfield Brewery and Interchange.
3. Agree the principle of commissioning external support to accelerate the preparation of the strategy, the identification of delivery mechanisms and to use as a lever to secure external funding.
4. Approve the required budget identified in paragraph 8.1 of this report and authorise a transfer from the Regeneration Reserve to cover £230,000 of this expenditure.

5. Approve the application to appropriate external bodies e.g. LEP and EU to secure external funding.
6. To agree to the principle of receiving further updates on delivery progress of this strategy.

Recommendations for noting:

Cabinet is asked to note:

1. Note the change of name of Public Realm to Connected Places
2. The progress made to date with a number of work streams which form part of the Connected Places Project.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To present Cabinet with an update on progress in developing the City Centre Connected Places project and to seek agreement to the development of a strategy and delivery plan for the improvement of the public realm within the City Centre.
- 1.2 Cabinet is also requested to;
 - Agree a budget to support commissioning of the studies
 - Agree to the procurement of a number of commissions
 - Agree to external funding support being sought to secure external funding to deliver quality connected places.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The project was previously known as the Public Realm Project however following consultation with Councillors and stakeholders it became apparent that the terminology of Public Realm was unclear and did not easily identify the nature or scope of the project. Subsequently this matter was considered by the Public Realm Steering Group and City Centre Programme Board and Connected Places was resolved to be the preferred recommended alternative name.
- 2.2 The City Centre Connected Places project is a comprehensive, wide ranging programme of works designed to substantially improve the City Centre environment in both aesthetic and functional terms for the benefit of all.
- 2.3 Public space is a critical component of the City Centre offer and as such the proposals and decisions on its design, use and management will impact on the future enjoyment, attraction and economic viability of the City as a whole. This has been reflected by recent engagement with potential investors and key landowners in the City Centre.
- 2.4 The scope of the Connected Places project incorporates design, implementation, management and maintenance of new and improved public spaces within the City Centre, creating improved connectivity between strategic developments whilst improving safety and security and integrating with new and improved car parking. Quality connected places should be legible, supported by clear directional signage.
- 2.6 Whilst the vast majority of the City Centre public realm is in the control of the Council it is widely recognised that the private sector and partner organisations have a significant role to play in delivering a quality public realm. Furthermore it is critical that these private and public spaces are linked and cohesively managed with other City Centre public space.
- 2.7 Public realm was identified as an important element of the City Centre Regeneration Strategy in the 2012 Prospectus to enhance the connection of the various parts of the City Centre.
- 2.8 On 24 October 2012, Cabinet approved proposals for The City Centre Transportation and Public Realm Improvement project to support and facilitate the delivery of this strategy. The objective of the project was to reduce traffic congestion and conflicts with

pedestrians in the City Centre streets whilst significantly improving the pedestrian environment along key routes. An extensive public and stakeholder consultation exercise was undertaken as part of the project development and the outcome was reported to Cabinet on 5 March 2013.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 Early phases of public realm improvements were delivered as part of the Transport and Public Realm Improvements Works Programme to improve connection from Interchange to the retail core. The works, which are still ongoing, involve the improvement of the highway and footway in Queen Street, Princess Street, Market Street and Garrick Street. New public space has been created that will provide the potential to bring together new business uses into the City Centre.
- 3.2 The current public realm improvements have been undertaken with a palette of materials that has been approved by the public realm maintenance team as being fit for purpose. Maintenance regimes are being developed to ensure that the improved areas are kept at a high standard and with minimal deterioration. These regimes include input from the City Centre BID and a street washing programme in specified areas to compliment the council's 7 days per week daily cleansing routine. Highways maintenance find and fix arrangements are also being established to deal with footway defects on a proactive basis.
- 3.3 Feedback from businesses have resulted in changes to protocol and lessons learnt. Through continued engagement with stakeholders and potential investors it has become evident that a robust strategy which is more strategic in scale and links areas of significant regeneration opportunity, based on evidence, needs to be developed. This evidence should have regard to the economic functioning of the area, key areas of pedestrian flows, development sites and opportunities for linking these development sites. Consideration also needs to be given to access, servicing and traffic flows to support the growth of the City Centre.
- 3.4 Some of the City's most significant sites that generate footfall are situated outside of the Ring Road e.g. the University Molineux Campus and football ground. Similarly some of the major regeneration opportunities are outside of the ring road and include Interchange, Royal Hospital site and Canalside, the latter includes the site of Springfield Brewery and the proposal for a major new education and training hub. Linkage between these sites and the City Centre core needs to be improved, it needs to be made more safe, clearly identifiable and comfortable to navigate if the growth potential of the City is to be realised.
- 3.5 To deliver this ambitious agenda the Council will work in collaboration, with its partners, under the strategic governance of the Public Realm Steering Group chaired by the Service Director City Economy, that comprises a mix of Council employees and external partners including representatives of the University, the Football Club, City of Wolverhampton College, the Business Improvement District (BID) and Mander Centre. The West Midlands Police have also expressed an interest, and will be invited to future meetings. The objective of the Steering Group, which reports to the City Centre

Programme Board, is to ensure that the highest quality connected places is delivered in a sustainable way with wider public and stakeholder engagement. There are a number of emerging work streams that will be steered and coordinated by the Steering Group, the first is the Connected Places Strategy. These are set out below in more detail.

- 3.6 **The City Centre Car Parking Strategy** has already been externally commissioned seeks to provide an evidence based assessment of the changing car parking requirements that will result from the regeneration of the City. It will be used to determine the location, quantum and type of car parking required in future as the regeneration of the City Centre takes place. The early procurement of this work stream is seen as an important first stage to contribute to the delivery of an improved and effective connected places. The City Centre car parking strategy will need to integrate with this wider connected places strategy work. The Strategy is due to be completed by December 2015.

Early priority workstreams

- 3.7 Two early work streams have also been identified. The University has a significant student population in the City Centre of 23,000 students and the Football Club attracts a significant number of visitors and businesses. The University needs to present its facilities as an attractive Campus offer when seeking to attract students both nationally and across the Globe. There is an interest to make this area more pedestrian friendly. Whilst the Football ground attracts a large number of pedestrians it also needs to provides for a large number of corporate client and needs car access and car-parking. There is a consensus to re-visit the **Molineux Quarter Masterplan** originally produced in 2011, to make the area more pedestrian friendly, re-consider the car-parking arrangements as part of the City Centre car parking strategy and improve links to the core of the City Centre. Therefore the Molineux Quarter Masterplan will be refreshed and developed into a Strategic Development Framework. It will be updated to reflect changes in land ownerships, development priorities and aspirations for an improved public realm in the area. A brief for consultants has recently been drafted with partners in preparation to procure a consultant to progress this piece of work.
- 3.8 The second priority workstream has been identified due to the need to improve the pedestrian links from Interchange to Springfield Brewery. Work has commenced on site and the West Midlands Universal Training College is scheduled to open in September 2016 and will accommodate students aged 14- 19 years of age. There is a perception that the pedestrian route needs to be made more clear and safe. Therefore **A low carbon project is being developed in partnership with the University** to secure external funding from ERDF and Local Growth Funds. The proposal is to link Interchange with Springfield Brewery through improved pedestrian cycle access supported by improvements in lighting and signage.

4.0 Proposed Strategy

4.1 If the City is to reach its potential and compete for investment on a national and international scale it is important that the quality of the City Centre environment is attractive to businesses, residents and visitors. In order to ensure that the quality of design and implementation is achieved and all of the current public realm work streams are linked together it is necessary to develop an overarching public realm strategy and delivery plan. This extensive piece of work will need to be externally commissioned through an appropriate procurement process in order to receive additional resources and expertise required to produce the work.

4.2 The scope of the brief is currently being consulted on with internal and external partners however the consultants will be asked to address the following:

- Analyse and detail economic intelligence and its implications for the design and function of City Centre public realm
- Summarise the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to dealing with an improved public realm in the City Centre.
- Produce a vision statement which identifies principles and key deliverables linking into the key regeneration areas and clearly articulates what is necessary for delivery.
- Produce a project development plan that includes a programme for delivery which will integrate with existing strategies and commissions including the Molineux Quarter master planning, car parking strategy and Springfield Brewery / Interchange ERDF funding.
- Early consultation with City Centre businesses, residents and users, in line with the City Centre consultation protocol will also take place.

4.3 The outputs of the commission will be a delivery plan which will include a phased programme of public realm improvements. Themes to be covered to include;

- Access and connectivity (walking, cycling, public transport usage, parking)
- First impressions of the City (visual appearance, welcoming, legibility, and way finding)
- Creation of new and improve public spaces within the City Centre.
- Highway improvements, management and maintenance principles.
- Low carbon and greening
- Safety and security
- Functionality of spaces – The potential to use spaces for events and activities.
- Ensure that circulation between spaces is efficient and effective.

- Develop a delivery strategy identifying phasing in relation to wider City Centre regeneration activity, partners, timescales, funding streams and mechanisms.

5.0 Key risks

- 5.1 There are overarching risks and issues that should inform the consideration of the strategy and delivery plan. The approach to commissioning the study, working with partners to steer the commission and engagement of stakeholders from the outset will mitigate against these risks.

Perception / Image – The quality of the public realm is an extremely important factor in the attraction of the City Centre. If the environment is not improved then the vitality of the City Centre will not be improved resulting in an adverse impact on businesses. The development of the strategy will create the framework to draw external funding and links with private sector developers to deliver a coherent scheme for the connected places.

Reputational damage – The Council and its partners risk reputational damage in not tackling areas in need of improvement, which will send out negative messages about the progress and commitment to the regeneration of the City Centre. Through taking the steps set out in this strategy, the Council will demonstrate to its partners and investors that they have been listened to and the Council is showing leadership in developing the framework and measures to deliver the project. A robust and comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan will help mitigate against this risk.

Funding – failure to secure external funding will have an adverse impact on the delivery of the programme. In commissioning the strategy the City will have a clear evidence base from which to draw external funding which will put the City Centre in a much stronger position than at present.

6.0 Delivery Programme and Next Steps

- 6.1 The connectivity of the City Centre needs to be improved. Therefore it is proposed to work with landowners and partners to develop a coherent connected places strategy. Two related workstreams, which have been identified as priorities for partners and the City Centre, are in progress and will integrate with the overarching connected places strategy. The outcome of these commissions will be reported back to Cabinet at a future date.
- 6.2 The key milestones for the project are set out in the table below.

Key Milestone	Target date
Procure City Centre Connected Places Strategy and Delivery Plan	September 2015
Start Connected Places Strategy Commission	October 2015
ERDF bid for Springfield Brewery linkages	September/ October 2015
Molineux Quarter Development Framework commissioned	September 2015
Car Parking Strategy – final report	Dec 2015
Molineux Quarter Development Framework - final report	Jan 2016
Connected Places Strategy and Delivery plan – final report	March 2016

7.0 Financial implications

7.1 There is a resource implication of up to £270,000 required to support the preparation of a public realm strategy, specific pieces of design and feasibility work. Project Management support of £40,000 will be covered through existing City Development revenue budgets in 2015/16. This report then seeks approval to cover the other pieces of work totaling £230,000 from the Regeneration Reserve. Every opportunity will be taken to explore Black Country LEP feasibility funding in order to lever further external funding and the LEP has already been approached. [ES/26082015/R]

7.2 Costs for commissioning various reports and strategies are set out in the table below:

Description:	Costs £:
Commission City Centre Public Realm Strategy and framework for delivery	100,000
Molineux Quarter Masterplan Update	45,000
Other detailed strategy support/ surveys e.g. Springfield Brewery (essential for external funding bids)	20,000
Project Management support	40,000
Car parking strategy	65,000
Total:	270,000

8.0 Legal implications

8.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. In due course there may be a number of statutory processes to complete with regard to the formal arrangements around any proposals in and around the City Centre and associated 'traffic regulation orders' that will be required. RB/25082015/V

9.0 Equalities implications

- 9.1 This report is supported by an Equality Analysis which highlights that any adverse impacts that there may be will be more than compensated for by the great improvements that bringing a large part of the City back into popular and diverse use will create. The proposal will be supported by a full Equality Analysis as the scheme is developed, that will allow all stakeholders to negotiate a process that will comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty as created by Section 149 of the Equality Act. Councillors can therefore be confident that this report complies with their present responsibilities and that the process outlined will also allow the Council to use its influence in a way described by the Act and Duty. Through the preparation of planning guidance and design principles there is an opportunity to clearly convey principles of good design that promotes equality and accessibility.

10.0 Environmental implications

- 10.1 Development of a robust strategy and delivery plan will help to deliver an improved sustainable environment focused on improving the connected places and creating a legible environment conducive to walking and cycling, which will encourage modal shift and contribute to the reduction in carbon emissions. In addition the proposal will involve aesthetic improvements.

11.0 Human resources implications

- 11.1 There are no human resource implications from this paper.

12.0 Corporate Landlord implications

- 12.1 There are no known Corporate Landlord implications for this paper, but as the proposals develop, Corporate Landlord will be involved in the process as required.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

- 13.1 Taking Forward the Regeneration of the City Centre – City Centre Prospectus/Progress Update – Exempt Executive Decision (Amber) – Cabinet 15 November 2011
- 13.2 Consultation on draft scheme for City Centre Transportation and Public Realm Improvements – Cabinet 24 October 2012
- 13.3 City Centre Transportation and Public Realm Improvements – outcome of consultation and revised scheme. – Cabinet 5 March 2013