

Cabinet Meeting

26 April 2017

Report title	Connected Places Strategy Summary Document	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds City Economy	
Key decision	No	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Keren Jones, City Economy	
Originating service	City Economy	
Accountable employee(s)	Ruth Taylor Tel Email	Senior Regeneration Officer 01902 555635 ruth.taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Place Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board	3 April 11 April

Recommendation for action or decision:

Cabinet is recommended to approve:

1. The Connected Places Strategy summary document for distribution.

Recommendations for noting:

Cabinet is asked to note:

1. The progress of a number of Connected Places projects and work streams that have emerged as a consequence of the strategy's development.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To present Cabinet with a summary of the Connected Places Strategy and an overview of project development.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet approval for the Connected Places Summary document.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 A high quality public realm can have significant impact on the economic life of urban centres and should be an essential part of any successful regeneration strategy. The Council is in dialogue with an increasing number of developers and investors who want to bring forward new developments and an improved offer. They all reinforce the need for a well designed public realm in the city centre. Creating a public realm that is pleasant, clean and feels safer not only has a sound economic rationale, but also fosters civic pride and provides a range of social and health benefits for local residents.
- 2.2 A report was presented to Cabinet on 16 September 2015, which outlined a new people centred approach for public realm improvements in Wolverhampton city centre. At the meeting Cabinet agreed to commission the following strategy documents:
 - Connected Places Strategy
 - Car Parking Strategy
- 2.3 In December 2015 engineering and design consultants Aecom were commissioned to draw up a city centre Car Parking Strategy. They were required to assess parking supply and demand, and make recommendations about future provision in the city centre. As part of this work Aecom was also commissioned to develop a supporting data and analytical tool to assess the adequacy of the supply of parking as new regeneration schemes are brought forward and demand changes. This work was completed in 2016. Through this mechanism the Council is able to make a robust evidence based assessment of the changing car parking requirements in the city centre. The tool enables the Council to determine the optimum location, quantum and type of car parking required as the regeneration of the city centre takes place as well as the ability to model the supply and demand of car parking resulting from new development and policy changes.
- 2.4 In March 2016, transport consultants JMP were commissioned to produce a Connected Places Strategy and delivery plan for the City centre. The focus was on providing a framework to bring forward schemes to improve the city centre environment for pedestrians and cyclists thus improving the experience for shoppers, visitors and workers. As part of this commission JMP were tasked with conducting extensive baseline research to determine how public realm enhancements could be implemented in a way that would underpin economic growth in the city. Part of this research included a series of consultation events with the public and internal and external stakeholders. A delivery plan was also proposed which will help steer priorities and suggests a programme of project delivery over short, medium and longer term timescales.

2.5 Final drafts of both strategy documents were submitted in September 2016 and a variety of further detailed stakeholder consultations have since been undertaken.

3.0 Connected Places Strategy

3.1 The Connected Places Strategy sets out the vision, key themes and delivery recommendations. It sets the context for a suite of supporting document, guides and technical reports, including the Car Park Strategy, Baseline Report, Materials Guide and summary document that together make up the Connected Places Programme.

3.2 Extensive baseline work has identified the following as “key drivers for change” which the strategy seeks to address;

- The City centre needs a high quality public realm to make the City more attractive to people coming in to visit, work, learn and live, thereby helping to drive investment.
- There is a need to accommodate the additional demand for movement as a result of growth in and a shift towards non car based modes of travel. To achieve this, the environment for walking and cycling needs to be improved.
- Improvements to the walking and cycling environment will support the City’s priority of encouraging healthier lifestyles.
- Better connectivity between the city’s key assets and destinations needs to be achieved in order to attract people to visit and move around the city.

3.3 The Connected Places strategy sets out the following vision:

To create vibrant spaces that connect people to a thriving city centre retail and visitor offer driving jobs, opportunity and growth.

More broadly, the Connected Places Strategy will make significant contribution to the delivery of the City of Wolverhampton’s 2030 vision by contributing to the creation of;

A city centre we are all proud of, with outstanding, vibrant, connected public spaces encouraging healthier lifestyles through walking and cycling, and further boosting growth and investment.

3.4 There are eight key objectives necessary to fulfil this vision.

- Ensure safety at all times
- Make the city centre a fun and enjoyable place to spend time in
- Improve the cleanliness and quality of the public realm in the city centre
- Minimise negative impact of vehicles
- Enhance the city’s rich heritage and culture
- Introduce more trees, greenery and open spaces
- Make the city centre easier to navigate and raise awareness of what’s on offer

- Ensure the city centre is accessible for all by all modes, with appropriate parking provision

3.5 Eight cross cutting themes are identified, which will underpin the objectives and vision. The themes are listed below:

- Identity
- Events
- Wayfinding
- Safety
- Car Parking
- Management and maintenance
- Digital technology

3.6 The Connected Places Strategy will provide a future blueprint for all public realm works across the city centre whether delivered by the Council or other partners and stakeholders. By adopting the vision, objectives and themes the Council can ensure that public realm interventions are coordinated and consistent. In this respect, the strategy is an essential component in the city centre's regeneration as it will create the appropriate platform for development.

3.7 The Connected Places Strategy summary document is attached at appendix 1. The Strategy and its delivery plan are supported by a suite of technical documents.

3.8 It will be delivered through a range of mechanisms including;

- **Major development schemes** e.g. Interchange, Westside, City Learning Quarter, Canalside Quarter, Molineux Quarter
- **Cross cutting projects** rolled out across the whole city centre e.g. the City of Wolverhampton Council's approach to way finding, the "leaves and light" initiatives
- **Campaigns and partnerships** e.g. a partnership approach to events
- **The planning process and guidance** e.g. new developments being brought forward by independent investors, developers, businesses and individuals
- **Maintenance and management regimes** e.g. the city centre public realm design guide

4.0 Connected Places projects progress

4.1 The Connected Places Strategy sets out a number of physical projects and work has already begun on developing and delivering these, with the aim of securing external funding for their implementation. A summary of these projects is listed below;

Springfield Campus Link – This project covers improvements to the pedestrian and cycling route between Springfield Campus, the Interchange and wider City centre as a response to the need to improve the safety and pedestrian experience for students travelling to and from the West Midlands Construction University Technical College (WMCUTC) and other educational establishments on the site. Works to deliver phase 1

which links the campus and Wednesfield Road began in November 2016 and was completed at the end of March 2017. The works have been wholly support by Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP) funding. Phase 2 which will link Wednesfield Road to the Interchange is currently being drawn up and funding is being sought from the Black Country LEP and European Regional Development Fund.

Westside Link – With the exciting and transformational Westside leisure scheme there is a need to ensure that the pedestrian links between strategic regeneration sites and the city centre core are strengthened and made more attractive. A route which has been identified as an early priority is Victoria Street, Queen Square and Lichfield Street. A project focussed on this area would offer the opportunity to improve important links between the city centre retail core, Westside and the City's principle cultural venues. Proposals for a major public realm and highway improvements scheme in this area are currently being developed and discussions are ongoing with partners such as House of Fraser, Benson Elliot and Urban & Civic to build a business case for the project for external funding. Baseline surveys and consultations have already been undertaken in the area following the temporary closure of Queen Square and Victoria Street during the summer 2016.

Royal Hospital / St Georges- With proposals for the housing development on the Royal Hospital site progressing consideration is being given to how to improve the connectivity across the Ring road through to the city learning Quarter and wider City centre. Scoping work is being undertaken in consultation with the HCA and other key strategic partners in the part of the City centre.

Molineux Quarter – A feasibility study has been produced to explore options for enhancements to the Molineux Subway; the creation of a new event space on St Peters car park and the introduction of a surface-level crossing. The project is being scoped as a response to requests by the University and Football club to improve the walking and cycling routes from the Molineux Quarter into the City Centre. The University and Football club are fully engaged in the consultation on options and the way forward for the wider public realm improvements in the quarter.

5.0 Next steps

- 5.1 The final section of the strategy outlines governance, phasing and delivery options for public realm interventions. This section addresses the following areas:
 - Delivery issues and interdependencies
 - Governance arrangements
 - Phasing and Delivery timetable
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the delivery plan will evolve over time as developments come forward and priorities or funding streams change.
- 5.3 As part of delivery, all projects and work streams will be managed by the Connected Places Board, Keeping the City Moving Board and City Centre Programme Board.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 There is a capital budget for the Springfield Campus Link of £600,000 in 2016/17 which is fully funded from Local Growth Fund Grant. Feasibility work around the Molineux Quarter (£33,000), ring road environmental improvements (£25,000) and Westside Link project (£40,000) are being funded through the regeneration reserve to develop the proposals to a sufficiently detailed stage that is required to attract external investment.
- 6.2 There are currently no Council capital resources allocated for this project within the Connected Places programme. The strategy forms the essential technical basis to make robust bids to a range of external funding bodies to secure resources to deliver the improvements identified [ES/06042017/V]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. However 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'. [RB/04042017/N]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 This report is supported by an Equality Analysis which highlights that any adverse impacts which are identified through extensive consultation will be addressed and any future risks mitigated against as far as possible through high quality design and management. 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 detailed design principles there is an opportunity to clearly convey principles of good design that promotes equality and accessibility.

9.0 Environmental implications

- 9.1 The development of a robust strategy and delivery plan will ensure the delivery of an improved sustainable environment focused on improving the connectivity of places and creating a legible environment conducive to walking and cycling, which will encourage modal shift and contribute to the reduction in carbon emissions.

10.0 Human resources implications

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

11.0 Corporate Landlord implications

11.1 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.

12.0 Schedule of background papers

12.1 City Centre Public Realm (Amber) – Cabinet, 15 September 2015