

Sponsor: Strategic Director Communities and Place

Author: Spatial Planning Group Manager

## **Towards A New Vision for Derby City Centre - Ambition**

### **Purpose**

- 1.1 Derby city centre, like many in the UK, is trying to deal with significant change exacerbated by the Covid 19 pandemic. How to respond and adapt will be key to its success into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. To help guide us, we need a clear, bold vision to tackle the challenges head on and take advantage of new opportunities.

This report seeks Cabinet approval to consult on the attached draft document which is the first step towards creating a Derby City Centre Vision and strategy for the radical transformation of the city centre to restore its position as the heart and soul of Derby. This would replace the current City Centre Masterplan 2030.

- 1.2 The process will have three components:
1. **AMBITION:** (Appendix 1) which sets out ideas and seeks to establish the level of ambition in the city for transformation. It will go out for consultation for at least 12 weeks starting at the end of May. It also identifies further studies to understand some areas in more depth to then be able to draw up specific proposals.
  2. **VISION:** the final document should be completed by mid-2023
  3. **DELIVERY:** A separate document will be created which will set out a shorter-term programme of projects and interventions to move towards our agreed Vision.

### **Recommendations**

- 2.1 To approve the appended document 'Towards A New Vision for Derby City Centre – Ambition' as a draft and to undertake consultation on it from May 2022 for 12 weeks
- 2.2 To authorise the Strategic Director of Communities and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Decarbonisation and Strategic Planning and Transport, to finalise the consultation document, including any minor amendments.

### **Reasons**

- 3.1 To enable a consultation of the emerging Vision to be undertaken.
- 3.2 To enable the text and graphics of the draft document to be finalised.

### **Supporting information**

- 4.1 **City Centre Masterplan 2030**
- The vision and its delivery plan will replace the current City Centre Masterplan 2030 which was published in 2016. It has been reviewed as part of the development process, which identified the need for replacement rather than refresh. The 2016 document has proved an effective tool over the past 5 years. Good progress has been made on delivering several important ambitions across all of its four themes - choice, business, living and connected:

- A fantastic new 3,500 capacity performance venue, managed by international operator ASM Global, is fully contracted to go ahead, with demolition on the existing building starting imminently. This is the second phase of regeneration at **Becketwell** – a huge priority in the 2016 Masterplan. A new 260-unit residential development is taking shape on site, funded by national investment leader Grainger Plc – further evidence that market confidence in the city is growing.
- The opening of the renovated and inspirational **Museum of Making** in 2021, realised a fundamental element of the city's offer as a destination of choice.
- The transformation of the historic **Market Hall** is well under way, including the spectacular unveiling of the renovated copper roof and designs for a dynamic, flexible new space which would move away from the traditional market feel.
- The **Connect portfolio** of managed workspaces in Derby has gone from strength to strength, recovering well from the shock of the pandemic and continuing to support hundreds of SME businesses.
- Derby's heritage has been celebrated and protected with the delivery of a **Townscape Heritage Initiative** funded with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, restoring buildings in the Green Lane/St Peter's Conservation Area such as the former Primitive Methodist Church.
- Further phases of the **Castleward Urban Village** have been delivered and are on site, with the future development assisted by a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) now in place for part of the site.
- The delivery of **Our City Our River** programme of flood protection measures has moved into the city centre and funding secured from the Environment Agency to enable completion of the Derby Riverside stretch through the city centre by 2026.

#### 4.2 **The challenge in 2022**

In 2022, however, Derby city centre is, like many others, facing significant challenges and needs to change to adapt to these. While many trends were already happening, such as increasing online shopping, they have been compounded by the pandemic. Long term structural changes, a minimal business offer and patchy city centre living have contributed to falling numbers of people on the streets and a growing number of unoccupied premises. This creates a deteriorating quality of environment and can exacerbate problems with crime and antisocial behaviour. This makes people less inclined to visit the centre, compounding the situation.

#### 4.3 **The complexity**

We need to stop and reverse the decline, but we know there is no single reason why it is happening and thus no simple solutions. As we look to the future there are many uncertainties and we know that there will be different views over what we should do. We know it is complicated and needs a range of interventions over different timescales. The aim of this document will be to provide a clear, overarching Vision which knits together different interventions and longer-term aspirations to produce a cohesive and holistic strategy.

#### 4.4 **What stakeholders told us**

The consultation document has been drawn up following discussions with a wide range of stakeholders and a review of best practice from other parts of the country and beyond. There was strong agreement over the main issues to be addressed:

- People want to see transformational change to make the city centre a place that people want to visit as well as live and work in.
- The city centre needs to be properly managed and curated, offering a more diverse range of attractions as well as more opportunity for living and working.
- Public realm needs to be significantly enhanced and new development better designed and related to their surroundings.
- There is a need for more green and blue spaces within the city centre, including a new city centre park.
- The value of our built heritage needs to be more widely acknowledged.
- Parts of the city centre are seen as unsafe with problems of late-night vandalism to shops and other businesses.

#### 4.5 **Our long-term response**

We have produced plans for the city centre before, most recently in 2012 and 2016, and we should not underestimate their role in helping to bring forward new development. For instance, schemes identified in the 2016 Plan, including the redevelopment of Becketwell, the renovation of the Silk Mill to create the Museum of Making and the renovation of the Market Hall have all come forward or are coming forward. In refreshing these plans, there is a need for a broader document which sets out our stall for how we see the city centre in the future. As such, it will provide a general direction of travel that other plans, strategies and development decisions should align with and support.

#### 4.6 **Ownership**

The Vision should be owned by the city as a whole and be supported by a wide range of partners and stakeholders. Whilst it will be non-statutory, it will inform the forthcoming statutory Local Plan and provide a framework for considering applications for planning permission.

#### 4.7 **Document structure**

The format provides a 'golden thread' between:

- ★ current initiatives
- ★ key issues, challenges and opportunities identified through consultation
- ★ themes and proposals
- ★ delivery principles

The draft consultation and final document will **not include** detailed policies or projects.

Whilst it focuses on themes and topics, it includes high level maps and diagrams where significant change is envisaged. Some of these are identified in the 'current initiatives' section and others are in the "challenges and opportunities" section.. It is envisaged that the final Vision document will include maps of the city centre as a whole showing key ideas and proposals.

#### 4.8 What are the themes?

In the consultation, each thematic section is followed by a series of questions intended to engage stakeholders to influence and shape the way forward.

- Climate change
- Culture
- Public realm
- Green and blue infrastructure
- City Living
- Accessibility and Connectivity
- Heritage
- Design Quality
- Learning
- Business and Creativity
- Shopping and Leisure

#### 4.9 Delivery and Coordination

Through this process we will establish a long-term vision for re-inventing the city centre and planning for transformational change. However, no Vision is complete without an accompanying strategy to deliver it.

It is acknowledged that the level of change suggested in this consultation document will require significant public and private sector intervention and investment over the long term to make it a reality and that this will be a challenge.

A separate delivery strategy will be prepared and rolled forward on a regular basis. This will set out a programme of projects to be delivered over a specific time frame such as 5 years, how these will be delivered and funded as well as any necessary interventions such as land acquisition. To help implement the Vision, we are investigating several different delivery models and establishing improved partnership governance dedicated to the city centre

### Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 The 12-week public consultation on the draft will begin in late May/early June. This will provide a wide range of stakeholders, including those already engaged, along with residents, communities and organisations, an opportunity to influence the emerging Vision. The consultation will utilise the latest social media and interactive tools through the Council's website and links will be shared with our partners for promotion through their own communication channels.
- 5.2 To shape the draft to this point, discussions have been held with over twenty different stakeholders with an interest in the city centre. These range from individuals and businesses to partnerships and representative bodies. Information from previous consultations on city centre issues has also been reviewed.

### Other options

- 6.1 The Council could choose not to prepare a Vision. This would mean there would be no articulation of how the city intends to address the identified challenges or develop a unified ambition on what the city centre should look and feel like in the future. This could limit future investment as many Governmental organisations and other investors want to see inspiring and aspirational strategies as demonstrating understanding, ambition and credibility.

## Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 All efforts have been made to manage costs and utilize in-house knowledge where this is available. The preparation of the vision requires the support of professional urban designers with specialist expertise and technical software, because these skills and tools are not available in-house. £50,000 will be needed to complete the second stage 'Vision' document over the financial year 2022/23, which will be covered by current resources.

## Legal implications

- 8.1 The Plan will be non-statutory and will not form part of, or carry the statutory weight given to documents of the Council's Development Framework. Nevertheless, it will be a material consideration in the determination of applications for planning permission, especially where it conforms to national and local planning policy.
- 8.2 On 8 December 2021 Council Cabinet authorised the start of work on a new statutory Local Plan. It is intended that the City Centre Vision will form an important part of the evidence base for that Local Plan and elements will be incorporated into it.

## Climate implications

- 9.1 Addressing climate change is a key theme of the Vision.

## Other significant implications

- 10.1 Whilst the Vision will be high level, it needs to promote a more inclusive city centre in which everyone can feel welcome and enjoy and which can help people of different backgrounds mix with each other.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Stephen Teasdale	8 March 2022
Finance	Janice Hadfield, Head of Finance Service Support	25 March 2022
Service Director(s)	Verna Bayliss, Director of Planning, Transport & Engineering	25 March 2022
Report sponsor	Rachel North, Strategic Director of Communities & Place	25 March 2022
Other		

Background papers:	
Appendices:	1: Towards A New Vision for Derby City Centre - Ambition