

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 5 October 2017

George Street and First New Town Design Project Update

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Executive/routine	
Wards	11 - City Centre
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Executive Summary

This report updates Committee on the George Street and First New Town Design Project (GNT).

A consultancy team is now appointed and will commence a preliminary design; this follows authorisation by Transport and Environment Committee at its meeting of [7 June 2016](#) to expedite procurement of design work for George Street, and approval of a revenue contribution for the preliminary design consultancy costs by Transport and Environment Committee at its meeting of [21 March 2017](#). The project scope also takes into account the need to factor in the interdependencies across the First New Town, and the wider city centre context within which George Street operates.

George Street and First New Town Design Project Update

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - 1.1.1 notes that the contract for design services, at a value of £289,400.00 for the George Street and First New Town Design Project (GNT) was awarded to WYG Environment Planning Transport Ltd by the Executive Director of Place on 25 September 2017 under delegated authority.
 - 1.1.2 notes that the scope of GNT project work is wider than previous George Street project, and is being developed within the context of the Central Edinburgh Transformation, being reported to this committee.

2. Background

- 2.1 [On 29 April 2014](#), Transport and Environment Committee approved an 18 month Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) for George Street. This examined the operation of a two-way cycle lane, part closure of the street to traffic, and provided extra space for pedestrians on each block. During the trial, consultants studied and reported on the flexibility and adaptability of the street, seasonal variations in footfall, use of the street, and perceptions of what had or had not worked, and impacts on the street and the surrounding neighbourhood.
- 2.2 The ETRO trial was the starting point for engaging with stakeholders in the George Street and the New Town area, and their considerable input was used to help develop Design Principles for George Street. The Design Principles were approved at Transport and Environment Committee on [7 June 2016](#) and provide the guide for the next stages of the street's design.
- 2.3 In order to expedite the delivery of a public realm design for George Street, Transport and Environment Committee on [7 June 2016](#) also authorised officers to explore appropriate procurement options, securing best value for the Council and ensuring appropriate design and technical expertise required to develop a design for the street.

- 2.4 An internal scoping exercise in autumn 2016 noted that the operation of George Street is interdependent with the operation of intersecting 'First New Town' Streets - Castle, Frederick and Hanover. It also identified that the project must integrate with a number of pipeline schemes and plans in the area.
- 2.5 Consequently, this identified the need for a wider, master planning approach to the First New Town streets. A short update in the Transport and Environment Committee Business Bulletin on [21 March 2017](#) set out this wider scope.
- 2.6 Due to the complexity and scale of the project the Council does not have the capacity in-house to deliver this project. Therefore, the Council is required to procure suitably qualified and experienced supporting design consultancy services.
- 2.7 At its meeting on 21 March 2017 Transport and Environment Committee approved the allocation of funding aimed to ensure that the condition of Edinburgh's transport infrastructure continues to improve and supports the Council's Local Transport Strategy objectives, in particular, the Active Travel Action Plan and the Council's "Place" making agenda. This provided a budget of £220,000 revenue in 2017/18, towards the consultancy costs of the preliminary design for the GNT project. The details of the GNT consultancy contract, awarded by the Executive Director of Place under delegated authority, are provided in this report.
- 2.8 As reported to Transport and Environment Committee on the [30 August 2016](#), the City Centre West to East Cycle Link and Street Improvements (CCWEL) provide context for cycle infrastructure through the First New Town. George Street has been identified as a key city centre link in this context, and therefore, CCWEL will be fully integrated as a core component of the GNT design.

3. Main report

Scope of George Street and First New Town Preliminary Design

- 3.1 George Street is the premier street in Edinburgh's First New Town, with its unique Georgian architecture it is a high profile focal point within the Unesco World Heritage site. Its historic character is of city-wide and national importance.
- 3.2 The way that the street, and activity on it operate, are fully interdependent with the intersecting First New Town streets of Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street; capital works are planned for the latter two, as are works in Charlotte and St Andrew Squares. Any potential future layout in George Street must tie in to these streets.
- 3.3 The operation of the junctions along George Street are also interdependent with the operation, and demands on intersecting streets and squares, therefore any design solution for George Street must take into account a range of movement and connectivity in surrounding streets, as well as enhancing public realm. For this reason, the preliminary design study area includes these streets and their operation in particular, but also the wider context of the operation of central Edinburgh.

- 3.4 The GNT project scope also ensures that a preliminary design is fully integrated with, and helps inform the City Centre West to East Cycle Link and Street Improvements scheme (CCWEL), of which a key section follows the National Cycle Route 1 along George Street.

Wider context

- 3.5 The Central Edinburgh Transformation report to this committee, outlines a project and process that will help inform the GNT project. It will develop a holistic, and comprehensive vision for how Edinburgh's city centre must evolve, that provide the context for key public realm projects such as GNT, and should take important steps towards achieving the ambitions set out in the 2050 Edinburgh City Vision.
- 3.6 The Central Edinburgh Transformation project seeks to reflect the value of central Edinburgh to all its citizens. It will involve rethinking transport priorities across the city, in order to deliver streets and a public realm that better meet the needs of residents, pedestrians, cyclists, and provide a more integrated public transport network. The wider city also relies on central Edinburgh for its working and social life, as a place of recreation, retail and natural amenity, to move around the city's neighbourhoods, and the development of the GNT preliminary design will respond to the need for a public realm that supports these requirements.
- 3.7 The redesign of George Street will play a critical part in the continuing evolution of the city centre and its identity. A revitalised George Street will also have a key economic role as a link between the West End and the new St James quarter.
- 3.8 Coordination of these large city centre projects, alongside the introduction of the tram and improved cycle access across the city, strengthens the city centre as a working, active place for residents and visitors of Edinburgh.
- 3.9 The development of the GNT project, alongside other major transport projects and improved cycle access across the Central Edinburgh Transformation process, will be overseen by the Central Edinburgh Development Working Group.

Procurement of a preliminary design

- 3.10 Under the guidance of Commercial and Procurement Services, the procurement of a suitably qualified and experienced consultant has been conducted as a mini-competition through the Scotland Excel Engineering and Technical Consultancy Services Framework Contract (Lot 2).
- 3.11 Given the important historic character of George Street, it is essential to ensure a high quality public realm design is delivered. As such, the Council placed quality as the over-riding element within the tender exercise; the cost element was assessed on the prices submitted for a lump sum fee to carry out all services detailed in the specification.
- 3.12 The outcome of the tender evaluation is that WYG Environment Planning Transport Ltd is the Preferred Bidder, having submitted the most economically advantageous tender, in terms of quality and cost at £289,400.00.

- 3.13 WYG Environment Planning Transport Ltd have assembled a multi-disciplinary team, including experts in landscape architecture, planning, transport planning and modelling and public engagement, to now support the Council in the necessary consultation, modelling and analysis tasks required in order to develop and complete a preliminary design for George Street and the interdependent streets - Castle, Frederick and Hanover. The preliminary design (a 'RIBA Stage 3' design) for these streets will act as a 'blue print' for any future development of the area, and is intended to be adaptable, to allow for evolving future operation on these key streets.
- 3.14 GNT stakeholder input, engagement and listening exercises will be delivered by consultants as an integral part of the commission, and will be developed within the context of the consultation and engagement processes taking place as part of the Central Edinburgh Transformation project. A draft GNT design, that can support wider engagement, is expected by 31 March 2018, and a final preliminary design that takes into account any wider feedback, is expected by the end of June 2018.

Preparatory studies

- 3.15 In parallel with the procurement of a suitable consultant, and to further expedite delivery of the preliminary design process, two important pieces of advanced works have been undertaken. These are;
- 'Street/Public life' surveys which provide in depth baseline data on how the streets currently function for people on foot including: walking, sitting, relaxing, sightseeing etc. The data collected is different from more standard counts and interviews, as it provides understanding of precise pedestrian behaviour along the street.
 - Ground Penetrating Radar and Three Dimensional Topographical surveys of the entire design area, to provide an accurate base map of existing street features at and below ground level. Early identification of spatial constraints on street and the tracing of underground features, such as utilities and cellars, will inform the design as it emerges from the process.
- 3.16 To ensure effective coordination and accountability, the GNT design project is overseen by the Council's Central Edinburgh Development Working Group, chaired by Head of Place Development.

Funding

- 3.17 An additional, allocation up to a maximum of £120,000 has been secured from Sustrans Scotland's Community Links Plus scheme, in financial year 2017/18 (ending 30 June 2018). This is a contribution towards the overall costs of the preliminary design stage, providing an allowance for the Council to undertake additional work where required to achieve a preliminary design that is fully integrated with other key projects in the city centre, that promote active travel and a high-quality pedestrian experience.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 A preliminary design for the future layout of George Street and interconnected streets of Hanover, Frederick and Castle will be brought to Committee once available.
- 4.2 The design will reflect the design principles reported to Committee on 7 June 2016, but also be informed by the development of the Central Edinburgh Transformation project.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The total value of the contract is £289,400.00.
- 5.2 The value of the contract, costs associated with the procurement process, and additional studies required to develop the preliminary design will be met from the George Street and First New Town design project budget, which has been supplemented by an external funding award from Sustrans.
- 5.3 The likely cost of implementing any phases of the George Street public realm scheme would be subject of a future report to Committee, containing the detailed design as part of a TRO. This would follow the identification of an appropriate funding package. (Funding sources that might be considered include the Council's cycling budget, for the introduction of the cycle facility; the transport capital budget which is invested in the fabric of the city's public realm; plus a range of additional national funding sources including those aligned to supporting developments in areas with important Heritage considerations, and active travel, as well as other appropriate public, private and third sector funding sources that may emerge).

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no health and safety, governance, compliance or regulatory implications expected as a result of this report. The George Street and First New Town Design project is a key component within of the Council's evolving vision and approach to the city's central area, and its development is intended to make significant progress towards the Council's public realm strategy and contribute to future developments supporting the Council's Active Travel Action Plan targets.
- 6.2 There are no health and safety, governance, compliance or regulatory implications expected as a result of approving the recommendations of this report.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 An Equalities and Rights Impact Assessment (ERIA) process for the George Street and First New Town Design project commenced during the ETRO trial, and will remain in effect throughout the design process.
- 7.2 The project will work towards securing an improved environment for pedestrians and cyclists which will have a positive impact on the safety, freedom of movement and access for all who use the public space. Specific consultation with a range of equalities group representatives will be undertaken during the preliminary, and any further design stages. This will take into account any people whose characteristics are protected under the Equalities Act 2010.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of the project in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered, and the outcomes are summarised below.
- 8.2 The proposals included in the project will reduce carbon emissions by contributing towards the core objectives of the Council's Active Travel Action Plan to increase the number of people walking and cycling in Edinburgh.
- 8.3 The proposals included in the project will increase the city's resilience to climate change impacts by providing more opportunities for sustainable travel through improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure.
- 8.4 The proposals included in the project will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh by delivering environmental improvements which will benefit all visitors and users of the First New Town area.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The Design Principles for George Street were developed with input from an external group of Stakeholders from the immediate area, prior to Committee approval in June 2016. These principles provided the basis for further development of a long-term design layout for George Street and the interconnecting streets.
- 9.2 Community involvement (listening to and acting upon stakeholder views) will remain a key element of the development of a Preliminary Design. Broad ranging stakeholder and citizen involvement and input into the design process is considered fundamental to the success of the preliminary design.
- 9.3 Stakeholder engagement with those living, working or with businesses in the immediate design area was central to the development of the Design Principles, and continuation of this commitment to positive engagement will be core to the design development process of this next stage of work.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Report to Transport and Environment Committee on 5 October 2017, 'Central Edinburgh Transformation
- 10.2 Report to the Transport and Environment Committee on [29 April 2014](#), 'George Street Experimental Traffic Regulation Order'
- 10.3 Report to the Transport and Environment Committee on [7 June 2016](#), 'George Street Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, Concluding Report and Design Principles'
- 10.4 Report to the Transport and Environment Committee on [30 August 2016](#), 'City Centre West to East Cycle Link and Street Improvements: Consultation Results and Potential Project Amendments'.
- 10.5 Report to the Transport and Environment Committee on [21 March 2017](#), 'Road, Footway and Bridges Additional Investment – Capital Programme for 2017/18'

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11. Appendices

Nil