

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 16 May 2019

Edinburgh City Centre Transformation - Proposed Strategy

Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All
Council Commitments	16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 48

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 This report recommends the Transport and Environment Committee:
 - 1.1.1 approves the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Proposed Strategy (Appendix 1) for a six-week public consultation to begin on 20 May 2019;
 - 1.1.2 notes Edinburgh City Centre Transformation's relationship to the emerging City Mobility Plan, proposed Low Emission Zone, and design, operation and management of the city centre, including city centre projects currently underway; and
 - 1.1.3 approves the launch of the Meadows to George Street design proposals (Appendix 5) for public consultation for six-weeks commencing 27 May 2019.

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Edinburgh City Centre Transformation – Proposed Strategy

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Edinburgh City Centre Transformation's (ECCT) Proposed Strategy sets out an ambitious programme to prioritise movement on foot, bike and public transport in central streets and to adapt public spaces to better support urban life, a thriving economy, conserve our unique heritage and provide improved access and opportunity for all.
- 2.2 The case for change in Edinburgh City Centre is social, economic and environmental – the three pillars of sustainable development. Edinburgh's city centre evolved from a defensive stronghold, witnessed one of the finest examples of an 18th century planned new town and continues to manage and re-interpret its historic environment. However, to remain competitive, the city centre must become a model of sustainable urban liveability, enabled by an exemplar public realm and transport system.
- 2.3 Faced with a number of major challenges, the city must act now to sustain and enhance quality of life and ease of movement in and around the capital. This includes: adapting to the needs of an ageing and growing city and city region population with significant vehicle-based commuting, addressing physical inactivity and associated health-risks, responding to legal Air Quality Objective exceedances, providing a quality leisure experience to rival the convenience of online retail, managing the success of the internationally renowned festival and visitor economy, and responding to a changing climate.
- 2.4 Following extensive public and stakeholder engagement, data analysis, multi-modal transport modelling, benchmarking with international cities, and options appraisal, this report submits the ECCT Proposed Strategy to Committee for approval to proceed to public consultation. Public consultation is proposed for a six-week period from 20 May to 28 June 2019.

- 2.5 The Proposed Strategy sets out the key infrastructure, policy, and management interventions to transform the city centre over the next ten years, including:
- 2.5.1 A pedestrian priority zone, forming a network of connected, high quality, car-free streets that create a walkable city centre right at the heart of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh's World Heritage Site;
 - 2.5.2 Key central streets and public spaces improved and enhanced to better experience the city's unique heritage, cater for all ages and abilities and to provide calm places for rest, relaxation and play;
 - 2.5.3 New segregated and safe cycle routes to provide a seamless, connected network enabling those of all ages to bike confidently around the city centre for work and leisure;
 - 2.5.4 A free city centre hopper bus providing connectivity and ease of movement, in particular for central residential communities to access shops, services and employment;
 - 2.5.5 New lifts or other forms of vertical connections to improve access and the enjoyment of Edinburgh's spectacular topography, especially for older people, those with mobility impairments or push chairs;
 - 2.5.6 A new walking and cycling bridge to the east of the city centre creating a high-quality traffic-free connection, linking communities and regeneration in the Old Town and New Town;
 - 2.5.7 A significant reduction in on-street parking, encouraging sustainable travel and creating safer and more attractive streets, whilst prioritising resident and blue badge parking provision; and
 - 2.5.8 Better air quality through the implementation of a Low Emission Zone and traffic reduction through street space re-allocation and promotion of walking, cycling and public transport.
- 2.6 One of the first projects to be progressed under ECCT is Meadows to George Street – Places for People (MGS). It will establish a segregated cycle link from The Meadows via Forrest Road, George IV Bridge, The Mound and Hanover Street to connect with the City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL) at George Street. It also proposes widened footways, enhanced public space and improved access for all on some of Edinburgh's most iconic streets.
- 2.7 Following positive public and stakeholder engagement in 2018, this report seeks approval from Committee to launch a public consultation on the MGS project commencing 27 May 2019 (Appendix 5). The proposals include closure of Bank Street to general traffic, between Market Street and the High Street, retaining through access for public bus services, licensed taxis, servicing and local residents. Public access for drop off to Waverley Station would be retained from the north via the Mound and Market Street and from the Pleasance to the south.

3. Background

- 3.1 In October 2017, the Council committed to develop a transformation programme to improve public realm in the city centre with the aim of improving conditions, and prioritising access, for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users.
- 3.2 A shared vision, working aims and objectives were agreed through the cross-party Central Edinburgh Development Working Group and approved by Committee in May 2018 as follows:
 - 3.2.1 ‘Our shared vision is an exceptional capital city centre that is for all, a space for people to live, work, visit and play. A place that is for the future, enriched by the legacy of the past.
 - 3.2.2 To achieve this vision, we will work collaboratively to create a city centre that is the heart of Edinburgh’s communities, its cultural and civic life, and the focal point for its economy.’
- 3.3 Daisy Narayanan from Sustrans was seconded to lead a multi-disciplinary team of council officers, supported by Turner and Townsend (providing project management services) and Jacobs UK to develop the transformation strategy and delivery plan. The programme has been funded by the Sustrans Community Links programme.
- 3.4 The initial ideas for ECCT emerged from stakeholder engagement in Spring 2018 and the joint public consultation to develop the City Mobility Plan and Low Emission Zone in autumn 2018, through the [Connecting our City, Transforming our Places](#) prospectus and [Connecting Places website](#).
- 3.5 Edinburgh’s city centre is an intensification of the city-wide and regional challenges being addressed by the City Mobility Plan. Central streets also experience some of the highest legal air quality objective exceedances (due to road transport) which Edinburgh’s Low Emission Zone proposals respond to. These projects have been progressed alongside ECCT and are the subject of related reports on this agenda for Transport and Environment Committee.
- 3.6 The city centre faces the challenge of sustaining and enhancing liveability and quality of life for its residential communities, whilst creating an attractive environment as the regional focus for business, retail and tourism.
- 3.7 The city centre’s historic streets present challenges to older people, those with physical and sensory impairments and those with young children. Improved surfacing, re-allocation of street space and priorities at junctions are required to create a safer, more pleasant and inclusive environment, where it easy to walk, cycle, use mobility aids and take public transport as part of daily life.
- 3.8 Capacity around public transport hubs must be increased to accommodate Edinburgh’s growth including:
 - 3.8.1 a resident population of close to 600,000 by 2040;
 - 3.8.2 a city centre workforce in excess of 100,000;
 - 3.8.3 the city’s four million annual visitors; and

- 3.8.4 annual rail passengers at Waverley Station forecast to double by 2048, to 49 million passengers per year.
- 3.9 Of the 4,192 people that responded to the Autumn 2018 *Connecting our City, Transforming our Places* consultation, 88% supported change to deliver a city fit for the future and 75% of respondents supported traffic reduction in the city centre to create a better place to live, work and visit, and where sustainable transport is supported.
- 3.10 On [28 February 2019](#), the Transport and Environment Committee noted the consultation findings and the development of three appraisal scenarios to examine different futures for the city centre, agreeing a revised set of aims and objectives and associated six principles to develop the proposed strategy.
- 3.11 This report submits the ECCT Proposed Strategy (appendix 1) for approval to progress to public consultation. The proposals combine the most effective elements from February's appraisal scenarios to deliver the ECCT vision, drawing upon consultation, data analysis, multi-modal transport models and international best practice.
- 3.12 Appendix 5, sets out the MGS – Places for People proposals. MGS builds upon the Council's [Active Travel Action Plan](#) and has been developed in conjunction with ECCT as well as integrating with the [George Street and First New Town \(GNT\)](#) project at Hanover Street.
- 3.13 MGS has been informed by public engagement in summer 2018, including an online 'Placecheck' attracting over 300 comments, on-street events and surveys, door to door business enquiries and a business drop-in session, and stakeholder and community workshops. In addition, surveys and modelling have analysed public transport and traffic flows, parking, cycling, pedestrian movement and the use of public spaces.
- 3.14 The most common feedback received, which also reflects issues raised more widely about the city centre, includes: streets being dominated by vehicles, a need for wider pavements and greater pedestrian priority, particularly around Greyfriar's Bobby at the junction of Candlemaker Row/George IV Bridge. There is a desire for more formalised pedestrian crossings and improved cycling provision, segregated from traffic and pedestrians, alongside better accessibility for all and reductions in street clutter.

4. **Main report**

Proposed Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Strategy

- 4.1 The Proposed ECCT Strategy provides a once in a generation opportunity to rebalance the design, management, and operation of the city centre to benefit city living, provide access for all, enhance our internationally unique heritage and support inclusive economic growth.
- 4.2 The Proposed Strategy (appendix 1) comprises:

- 4.2.1 the six principles guiding strategy development;
 - 4.2.2 a spatial framework that provides a holistic look at movement and quality of place across the city centre townscape;
 - 4.2.3 an explanation of the strategy from a user perspective, including:
 - pedestrians, cyclists, public transport passengers and operators - including taxis, drivers of private and commercial vehicles, families with children of school age and residents and visitors accessing parks and public spaces;
 - and
 - 4.2.4 six packages of interventions based on allocation of street space, public transport services, parking reprioritisation, optimisation of open space, city operations, management and behaviour change, and supporting policy and wider measures.
- 4.3 The Proposed Strategy illustrates how ECCT could be delivered across six catalyst areas, where changes to the design of the urban realm, its management and operation or governing policies could deliver the greatest benefits. Catalyst areas are defined as:
- 4.3.1 Haymarket/ West End – providing a high quality arrival experience to the west of the city centre, effective interchange to other transport modes and legible pedestrian and cycle links, in particular to key locations for employment such as The Exchange, Morrison Street and Rutland Square/Lothian Road.
 - 4.3.2 Lothian Road – transformation from a heavily trafficked north-south connection to a safe and welcoming multi-modal, tree-lined boulevard, with street space re-allocated from vehicles to provide widened footways, segregated cycleways and rejuvenated public spaces, This will enable offices, theatres, cinemas, bars, cafes and restaurants to thrive and rival Europe’s leading cultural destinations.
 - 4.3.3 Princes Street and the New Town – reinforcing Princes Street’s unique qualities to provide an inspiring and pedestrian focussed environment, where people can dwell and retail and other uses prosper. This will involve rationalisation of bus movements to improve journey times, providing enhanced east-west pedestrian crossings and better links to Princes St Gardens.
 - 4.3.4 Old Town – enhancing the character and pedestrian environment within the Old Town and providing a ‘quieter’ area for the benefit of all who live, work, visit with improvements to public realm, lighting and wayfinding that enhance perceptions of safety and promote lesser used and explored areas. General traffic would be restricted from a greater extent of the Royal Mile and connections with the Cowgate enhanced.
 - 4.3.5 Waverley/Calton – improving the public realm to celebrate the unique environment at each of Waverley’s entrances, creating an enhanced arrival experience with ease of movement to the wider city centre. This would

include closure of Waverley Bridge to vehicles and formation of a new gateway public space, improved vertical accessibility between the station and surrounding high level streets and creation of a new bridge from Jeffrey Street to Calton Road, significantly enhancing north-south pedestrian and cycle connections across the Waverley valley.

4.3.6 Innovation Mile – maximising the potential for research, innovation and collaboration associated with the University of Edinburgh and regeneration at Quartermile and Fountainbridge by providing a coherent and high quality public realm that links east-west walking and cycle routes to the south of the city centre. The proposal includes potential for the future introduction of tram, providing a city centre loop, with Potterrow serving as an interchange between tram, bus, cycle and walking routes.

4.4 Each catalyst area will strengthen the city’s inherent character, draw upon its unique offer and potential, using investment in transport as an enabler to create better streets and spaces designed around people. ECCT defines the long-term context for and adds value to several city centre projects:

4.4.1 Tightening of Tollcross junction could permit a quicker and more direct all-stop crossing for ease of pedestrian movement, while enabling segregated cycle connections between the Meadows and the Union Canal. These changes would provide improvements to the townscape and liveability within an important town centre and gateway to the city centre.

4.4.2 The closure of Bank Street to general traffic and wider traffic reduction measures across the city centre will support the proposed operational changes to George Street, whereby non-essential vehicle access is controlled, enabling public realm enhancements to provide a world class environment for retail and leisure.

4.4.3 Closure of Waverley Bridge to general traffic would allow South St David Street to be reduced from four traffic lanes to two, providing a more direct pedestrian connection between a re-imagined George Street and St Andrew Square and integrating the CCWEL. This change could also improve bus journey times for public transport passengers on Princes Street.

Delivery and Integration

4.5 To inform the ECCT Proposed Strategy an associated 10 year Delivery Plan and funding strategy is being developed to set out how Edinburgh’s city centre could evolve over time, key dependencies between policy and projects, and opportunities to align and phase delivery to minimise disruption, ensure best use of available funding, and unlock wider benefits from individual projects.

4.6 The Delivery Plan will provide local communities with joined-up information about the long-term vision for the city centre and greater confidence to businesses, investors and partner organisations, including where developer contributions may be required.

4.7 This will be presented to Committee in September as proposals are further refined following public consultation and will include a detailed 10-year programme commencing 2020, reflecting the timeline for delivery of CCWEL, MGS, and GNT. A Project Execution Plan (PEP) will also be completed by September 2019 to establish the means to execute, monitor and control all ECCT projects.

4.8 The indicative timeline for delivery adopts a three-phase approach to implementation with year one commencing January 2020. A summary of the stages and lead interventions is set out below:

Phase 1 – Years 1 - 3

4.8.1 Will focus upon street closures to general traffic in the Old Town, guided by the Festival Summer Streets and monthly Open Streets programme.

4.8.2 The West End junction will be delivered as a priority road safety project.

4.8.3 The CCWEL, MGS and GNT redesign will commence construction.

4.8.4 There will be renewed emphasis on operations and management to improve pedestrian, cycle and bus movements, as well as changes to on-street parking and loading restrictions (whilst maintaining and prioritising resident and blue badge parking provision).

Phase 2 (Years 4 - 6)

4.8.5 Will see delivery of permanent public realm improvements and traffic management between the Bridges and Netherbow Port to enhance and expand the Royal Mile's traffic free core.

4.8.6 A trial of city centre public transport loop would inform potential studies for second cross-city centre tram route and provide better access by public transport as city centre streets restrict non-essential vehicle access.

4.8.7 Pedestrian enhancements and segregated cycle lanes would form part of phased improvements to Lothian Road and work would commence on a new walking and cycling bridge across the Waverley valley.

Phase 3 (Years 7 - 10)

4.8.8 Princes Street and North Bridge public realm enhancements could be implemented in line with phasing of the Waverley Station masterplan.

4.8.9 Progression with integrated ticketing and timetabling across all public transport providers would support further development of city centre public transport interchanges.

4.8.10 New lifts or other vertical connections could be installed to create better accessibility between the Waverley valley, Cowgate and bridged streets.

4.9 The full benefits of ECCT will rely on the emerging City Mobility Plan tackling cross boundary traffic, freight, and working with City Plan 2030 to provide sustainable travel infrastructure for new developments. Equally, the Low Emission Zone will have a reduction on traffic volumes and result in improvements to air quality but must be supported by complementary measures.

- 4.10 Temporary logistics during construction of the Tram to Newhaven, will inform development of a local freight distribution model that could have wider application. It is expected that feasibility for a second cross-city centre tram link would form part of the business case for the development of Tram line three.
- 4.11 The Proposed Strategy and Delivery Plan is informed by multi-modal transport modelling which demonstrates that over a ten-year period, traffic reductions of between 25-30 percent could be achieved, through delivery of ECCT proposals and wider City Mobility Plan measures.

Meadows to George Street

- 4.12 Appendix 5 sets out the MGS proposals for approval for public consultation from 27 May. The concept is bold but achievable, prioritising: people wanting to walk and spend time enjoying the streets, enhancements to the historic environment and supporting local businesses. Cycling and accessibility for all will be greatly improved with public transport prioritised over general traffic.
- 4.13 In line with the Proposed Strategy, MGS will require changes to traffic movements including:
- 4.13.1 Closure of Bank Street, between Market Street and High Street, to general traffic (excludes service buses, licenced Edinburgh black cab taxis, residents of the streets concerned and limited loading and servicing);
 - 4.13.2 Pedestrian priority on Forrest Road, with vehicle access limited to residents of the streets concerned and limited loading and servicing;
 - 4.13.3 Teviot Place and Bristo Place will be changed to two-way traffic; and
 - 4.13.4 Pedestrian priority on Candlemaker Row, with number 2 bus service retained, as well as access for residents of the street and limited loading and servicing.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report but the final Strategy and Delivery Plan could have significant financial implications. The next stages of strategy development will include the preparation of detailed costings and development of a funding strategy.
- 5.2 The cost of delivering the Proposed Strategy and Delivery Plan through to September 2019 has been met by a funding award of £1.147m from the Sustrans Community Links Programme. A funding bid has been submitted to the 2019/20 Sustrans Places for Everyone grant scheme in order to progress ECCT Phase 1 activities.
- 5.3 MGS was one of the winners of Sustrans Scotland's 2017 Community Links PLUS, now known as Places for Everyone, design competition funded by the Scottish Government. The current projected construction cost is estimate at: £13m, with at least £6.5m of this funded by the Scottish Government Places for Everyone fund. Design costs are funded 100% from the Places for Everyone fund.

6. Stakeholder/Community Impact

Consultation

- 6.1 The future development of the city centre is a matter of interest for, and will impact upon, all those who live, work, study and visit the city. In particular, key groups include: the city's central residential communities, local businesses, third sector and member organisations, transport providers, Network Rail, the further and higher education sector and the development industry.
- 6.2 As reported to Committee in February 2019, the Proposed Strategy has been informed by a process of stakeholder engagement in Spring 2018 and public engagement in Autumn 2018, undertaken with the City Mobility Plan and Low Emission Zones.
- 6.3 Subject to Committee approval of the ECCT Proposed Strategy for consultation, the second phase of public consultation is programmed to run for a six-week period from 20 May – 28 June 2019.
- 6.4 The draft Phase 2 Consultation Plan is set out in appendix 2 and details the proposed engagement methods including print and social media, video, and public events, such as June's 'Open Streets' Sunday.
- 6.5 Consultation on the Proposed Strategy will focus on the high-level principles whilst directing members of the public to project specific engagement on related projects including Low Emission Zone proposals, GNT and MGS. Implementation of the Proposed Strategy will require ongoing consultation on specific projects when they are brought forward for delivery.
- 6.6 Subject to Committee approval, MGS will be subject to public consultation between 27 May and 8 July 2019. The consultation will encompass the public, residents, businesses and stakeholder organisations with a range of consultation events, workshops and on-street pop-ups. Materials and surveys will be shared by post, email, social media, display boards and a project website.
- 6.7 Cross project engagement is also being undertaken as part of the City Plan 2030 to inform review of the City Centre Retail Core Supplementary Guidance and its relationship with ECCT and George Street and First New Town.

Impact Assessment

- 6.8 Appendix 3 provides the draft Environmental Report and appendix 4, the interim Integrated Impact Assessment for ECCT.
- 6.9 ECCT is subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment under Section 5(3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, which has influenced each stage of developing the Proposed Strategy, from policy review to the selection of proposals. The SEA baseline and objectives have been aligned with CMP and City Plan 2030.

- 6.10 The draft Environmental Assessment will be subject to six weeks public consultation alongside the Proposed Strategy and focuses on the combined, secondary and synergistic effects of the interventions, alongside mitigation where required.
- 6.11 The SEA identifies that the Proposed Strategy will have major positive environmental effects on population and human health, air quality and climatic factors. Improvements to public realm could enhance the townscape, key views and access to cultural heritage assets, however, uncharacteristic greening and visually prominent vertical or bridge connections could adversely affect designated sites.
- 6.12 Use of green infrastructure where possible could enhance biodiversity, however increased footfall in Princes St Gardens and via Castle Rock could adversely affect the natural heritage. The retrofitting of Sustainable Urban Drainage systems will form part of the Council's street design technical factsheets.
- 6.13 The Proposed Strategy is subject to Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to ensure proposals take account of equality, Human Rights and Socioeconomic disadvantage. The IIA also incorporates environmental effects from the SEA.
- 6.14 The IIA has been informed by primary and secondary sources. This includes events and surveys through the 'Connecting our City, Transforming our Places' consultation, Market Research, meetings with Edinburgh Access Panel and an equalities workshop held in conjunction with George Street and First New Town project.
- 6.15 The interim IIA identifies that the Proposed Strategy would benefit equality, health and wellbeing and human rights, by re-allocating street space and creating a more inclusive public realm that supports access for all, walking and cycling. This could have positive economic effects through increasing footfall, dwell time and local spend, however, minor short-term negative impacts could arise through changes to passing trade and introduction of workplace parking levy. Provision of dedicated disabled parking is recommended to mitigate the potential negative impact of street closures upon people with disabilities seeking to access unique city centre services.

Governance

- 6.16 As reported in February 2019, joint governance is now in place for Edinburgh City Centre Transformation, City Mobility Plan and Low Emission Zones to ensure the ongoing alignment and progress towards the City's aspirations for a fair, thriving, connected and inspired Edinburgh.
- 6.17 Following consultation on the Proposed Strategy, final recommendations and a fully detailed and costed Delivery Plan will be presented to the Transport and Environment Committee in September 2019.

7. Background reading/external references

- 7.1 ['Edinburgh: connecting our city, transforming our places' – Findings of Public Engagement and Next Steps](#), report to Transport and Environment Committee, 28 Feb 2019

8. Appendices

Appendix 1	<u>Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Proposed Strategy</u>
Appendix 2	Phase 2 ECCT Consultation Plan
Appendix 3	ECCT draft Environmental Report
Appendix 4	ECCT interim Integrated Impact Assessment.
Appendix 5	Meadows to George Street – proposals for consultation.