

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	14 December 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	George Street Mini Masterplan
REPORT NUMBER	COM/22/291
DIRECTOR	Gale Beattie
CHIEF OFFICER	David Dunne
REPORT AUTHOR	Claire McArthur
TERMS OF REFERENCE	21

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Under the context of the Council's overarching City Centre and Beach Masterplan, as approved in August 2022, this report presents a Draft Mini Masterplan for the George Street area.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:-

- 2.1 Approves the content of the Draft George Street Mini Masterplan (Appendix 1) and notes the engagement undertaken with stakeholders to date (Appendix 2).
- 2.2 Notes the content of the Draft George Street Mini Masterplan Strategic Environmental Assessment Draft Scoping Report (Appendix 3) and notes that an Environmental Report will be prepared to accompany the George Street Mini Masterplan;
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to publish the Draft George Street Mini Masterplan and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment for a 6-week public consultation period in early 2023;
- 2.4 Instructs the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to report the outcomes of the public consultation on the Draft George Street Mini Masterplan back to Council by December 2023, including any recommended revisions to the Draft Mini Masterplan.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Hub North Scotland Limited (HNSL) has been engaged by the Council to act as the Project Management Office for the procurement and management of the

necessary design, consultancy and technical work to develop a Mini Masterplan for the George Street area.

- 3.2 At the City Growth and Resources Committee on 12 November 2021, Members instructed Officers to undertake public and stakeholder engagement in early 2022 on the future of the George Street area. A map of the George Street area to be considered by this exercise was included within the papers presented to this meeting. An online consultation exercise subsequently ran on the Council's Citizen Space consultation hub from 7 February 2022 for four weeks until 7 March 2022, and a summary of the 297 responses submitted to this consultation was presented to, and noted by, Full Council on 29 June 2022.
- 3.3 Following this consultation exercise, Officers were instructed to report back with a Mini Masterplan for the George Street area to this (December) meeting of Full Council. A Draft Mini Masterplan report is therefore presented as Appendix 1.
- 3.4 An accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment Draft Scoping Report to the Mini Masterplan is presented as Appendix 3. This Draft Scoping Report will be reviewed by Officers in the relevant Council Technical Teams (e.g. Natural Environment Policy) before being circulated to the consultation authorities (Nature Scot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Environment Scotland (for Scottish Ministers)) and subsequently progressed into an Environmental Report to accompany the final Mini Masterplan report.
- 3.5 The area contained within the George Street Mini Masterplan area is covered by several allocations by the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (LDP) 2017 (and emerging Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023, which is subject to a separate report to this meeting). The southern part of the Mini Masterplan area, closest to the Bon Accord Centre, is identified as within the City Centre Retail Core (NC2), with the rest of the area identified broadly as a Mixed Use Area (H2) or as an existing Community Site / Facility (CF1). There are also a number of other general LDP policies relevant to the area, including those on transportation.
- 3.6 The Mini Masterplan has been prepared in accordance with Aberdeen City Council's Masterplanning process and has been extensively informed by the public consultation exercise undertaken in early 2022. A report setting out the additional engagement that has been undertaken with key stakeholders since the public consultation period is presented in Appendix 2. This has included:
 - Offers of individual meetings with / presentations to the George Street Community Council, Robert Gordon's College and NESCol;
 - Attendance at pre-arranged meetings of the George Street Community Council;
 - A workshop with North East Sensory Services (NESS) users, supported by an interpreter; and,
 - Two Stakeholder Workshops to discuss the vision and opportunities for the Mini Masterplan area.
- 3.7 It is proposed that, should Members agree that a final version of the Mini Masterplan be prepared and approved, that the Mini Masterplan would sit as

one of the Council's Strategic Plans, underneath the wider City Centre and Beach Masterplan (see Figure 1, below).

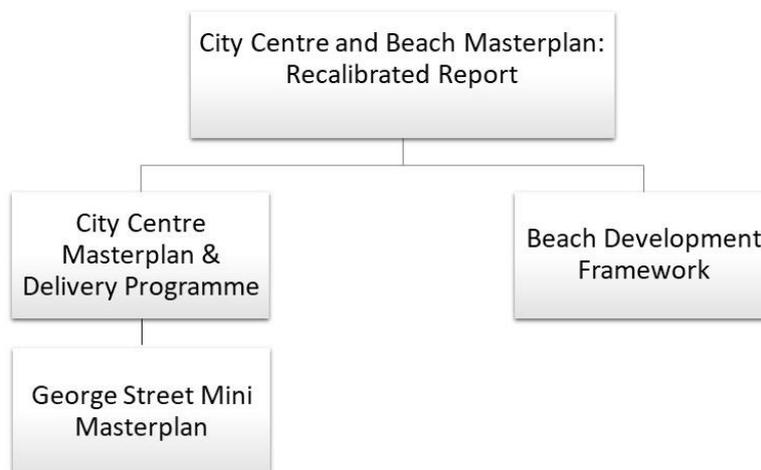


Figure 1: Strategy Relationships

- 3.8 The George Street Mini Masterplan will feed into subsequent annual reviews of the City Centre and Beach Masterplan to ensure this wider strategy for the City Centre and the Beach remains up to date and relevant, with a clear focus on delivery.
- 3.9 The Draft Mini Masterplan presents a vision for the George Street area in the wider City Centre context, complementing its existing strengths and building on recognised re/development opportunities. George Street is a complex, existing urban environment, and the proposals contained within the Mini Masterplan would need to be carefully managed and delivered alongside the existing requirements of local businesses and residents. The proposals should also, however, strive to create a clear step-change in the quality and function of the environment and look to support longer term redevelopment opportunities when they become available.
- 3.10 The Draft Mini Masterplan sets out objectives for people, place and economy, alongside identification of areas for potential change and future design principles for any future development. The Draft Mini Masterplan has been prepared in the context of the continued uncertainty around the future of Norco House (the former John Lewis building, currently for sale) and the Bon Accord Centre (the owners of which are currently in Administration).
- 3.11 The Draft Mini Masterplan sets out a vision for the George Street area as a *“vibrant, creative and inclusive city centre community at the heart of reinvention”* and as *“a place to form new connections: social, cultural, economic and educational”*. It also recognises the Mini Masterplan area as *“an authentic neighbourhood, offering an evolution of George Street: a place for people to come together, with spaces that link activities, aspirations and ideas.”*
- 3.12 The Draft Mini Masterplan proposes to:
- Embrace difference, by highlighting and celebrating variety;

- Build on reputation, by encouraging discovery and building recognition (e.g. by place branding and curation);
- Create new reasons to come to the area and unlock big changes through incremental interventions;
- Demand more from the area, by inviting activity, managing movement and enhancing arrival; and,
- Create a greener form of urbanism and more liveable environment.

3.13 The Draft Mini Masterplan identifies where change could occur to support the overarching vision and objectives for this area. It includes a Draft Action Plan which Officers propose be a key focus for public engagement in early 2023. This section includes a number of future projects for discussion (from short term to longer term) in order to help catalyse the delivery of transformational change for George Street, securing a range of economic, social and environmental benefits. Delivery of these actions will however require a co-ordinated and collaborative approach across various public and private sector organisations, and it is intended that these actions should continue to be refined through consultation with the local community, particularly in terms of how they are prioritised and who is best placed to take ownership and move actions forward towards delivery. The results of this engagement on actions and delivery will inform production of the Final Mini Masterplan report.

Next Steps – Public Consultation

3.14 This report seeks approval to begin public consultation on the Draft George Street Mini Masterplan and associated Strategic Environment Assessment Report over a 6-week period in early 2023. The consultation would be publicised through the Council's website and social media platforms, as well as via email to key stakeholders and consultees, and would include drop-in events and workshops.

3.15 Officers would then intend to report back the results of the public consultation by December 2023, including any recommended revisions to the Draft Mini Masterplan.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council Budget meeting on 10 March 2021 outlined a funding commitment totalling £150m from the General Fund Capital Programme over financial years 2021/22 to 2025/26 to ensure the Council transforms the City Centre and the Beach area. This allocation has been used to fund preparation of the Draft Mini Masterplan to date and will continue to be used to fund the next steps of the masterplanning process, including public consultation on the Draft Mini Masterplan report.

4.2 The Council will continue to facilitate the next phase of works with Hub North Scotland Limited and the supply chain of current contractors who will undertake works relating to two or more workstreams allowing lower cost. Use of HNSL should not exceed the values envisaged in the original contract notice.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Draft George Street Mini Masterplan will inform planning applications within the area. Each application will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Authority.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Draft George Street Mini Masterplan is accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment Draft Scoping Report (Appendix 3). This Draft Scoping Report will be reviewed by Officers in the relevant Council Technical Teams (e.g. Natural Environment Policy) before being circulated to the consultation authorities (Nature Scot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Environment Scotland (for Scottish Ministers)) and subsequently progressed into an Environmental Report to accompany the final Mini Masterplan report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Not progressing with George Street Mini Masterplan and/or other overarching City Centre and Beach Masterplan projects.	Publishing Draft Mini Masterplan for public consultation	L	Yes
Compliance	Considering any future traffic management arrangements which may impact on the deliverability of the Draft Mini Masterplan Objectives.	Manage through ongoing engagement programme with technical officers within the Council's Roads Authority.	M	Yes

Operational	Sufficient capacity of resources within Council teams to meet Draft Mini Masterplan objectives	Forward planning through CCMP and Beach project delivery programme Resource review ongoing and augmented by support through the HNSL Project Management Office	M	Yes
Financial	Budget pressures due to current market volatility	Robust budgets established once projects are identified and agreed. Independent monitoring process established.	M	Yes
Reputational	Uncertainty over future of the City Centre and George Street area in particular	Agree and implement projects, clear communications, articulate vision.	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	Air quality improvement Active travel	Mini Masterplan to address as project proposals are developed. Informed by public consultation and preparation of Environmental Report.	M	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	Supports the delivery of Economy Policy Statement 4 – Increase city centre footfall through delivery of the City Centre Masterplan. 1. – Continue to maximise community benefit from major developments.

<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 1 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 7 Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 14 Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate Supports Outcome 15 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026.
Regional and City Strategies	
	<p>The report supports the priorities in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) investment in infrastructure, regenerating our city centre, unlock development potential, improve the deployment of low carbon transport, to enable Aberdeen to realise development opportunities in the City Centre Masterplan.</p> <p>The report supports the National, Regional and Local Transport Strategies, particularly the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy, which prioritises the needs of those walking, wheeling and cycling above other road users, and the 4 pillars identified in the recent Regional Transport Strategy, Nestrans 2040: Equality, Climate, Prosperity and Wellbeing.</p> <p>It also supports the Aberdeen Active Travel Plan and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, both of which seek to improve conditions for people walking and cycling in Aberdeen, particularly to, from and within the City Centre, through the provision of more and safer infrastructure.</p> <p>Measures to reduce unnecessary vehicle traffic in the City Centre will support the Air Quality Action Plan, Climate Change Plan, Net Zero Action Plan and Low Emission Zone by contributing to emissions reduction.</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Undertaken as part of overarching City Centre assessment

Data Protection Impact Assessment	N/A
Other	Strategic Environmental Assessment

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017
<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-standards/local-development-plan/aberdeen-local-development-plan>
- Report to City Growth and Resources 12 November 2021
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s126154/Combined%20City%20and%20Beach%20Covering%20Report%20-%20Covering%20Report.pdf>
- Committee Decisions 12 November 2021
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/g8139/Decisions%2012th-Nov-2021%2013.00%20City%20Growth%20and%20Resources%20Committee.pdf?T=2>
- Reports to Council 29 June 2022
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s129266/220228%20City%20Centre%20Masterplan%20Update%20Report.pdf>
- Council Decisions 29 June 2022
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/g8188/Decisions%2029th-Jun-2022%2010.30%20Council.pdf?T=2>
- City Centre & Beach Masterplan - Reports to Adjourned Meeting of Council, 25 August 2022
https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s135128/CCMP%20-%20220629%20CCMP%20Update_Recalibrated%20Masterplan%20FINAL%20Report.pdf
- Council Decisions, 25 August 2022
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/g8436/Decisions%2025th-Aug-2022%2014.00%20Council.pdf?T=2>

11. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Draft George Street Mini Masterplan
Appendix 2: George Street Engagement Report
Appendix 3: SEA Scoping Report

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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