

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**CITY OF INVERNESS AREA COMMITTEE**

**2 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Agenda Item	4
Report No	CIA/32/14

**UPDATE ON INVERNESS CITY CENTRE DEVELOPMENT BRIEF AND KEY CITY CENTRE PROJECTS**

**Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure**

**Summary**

The report sets out progress in developing a City Centre Action Plan to reflect the outcomes of the recent public consultation on the City Centre, including initial steps to develop tourism and cultural facilities, improve access and connections and regenerate Academy Street.

It also outlines a proposed update to the Inverness City Centre Development Brief to incorporate the City Centre Action Plan and expand guidelines for future development in the City Centre.

**1 Background**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 3 June 2014 the City of Inverness Area Committee noted the outcome of a recent public consultation seeking feedback on land use and transport priorities in the City Centre. The consultation identified three priorities, which the committee agreed should inform the development of the City Centre Action Plan. These are:

- improvements to City Centre access and connections;
- development of Academy Street and its surroundings; and
- redevelopment of key sites to create visitor and cultural attractions.

The Committee also considered and commented on proposed initial actions for delivering these priorities.

- 1.2 In addition, the Committee agreed that the City Centre Action Plan should be incorporated into a forthcoming review of the Inverness City Centre Development Brief (ICCDB). The current ICCDB was approved by this Committee as Supplementary Guidance to the Highland-wide Local Development Plan in October 2012 and adopted in March 2013. It identifies and promotes opportunities for the re-development and enhancement of the city core. The scope of the new ICCDB is set out in Para 3.1.

**2 Ongoing work to develop a City Centre Action Plan**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider initial progress in addressing City Centre

priorities, presented in Appendix 1, and agree that ongoing work proceeds to inform the development of the new ICCDB.

### **3 Proposed scope of the updated Inverness City Centre Development Brief**

3.1 Appendix 1 summarises the proposed scope of the updated development ICCDB. The key changes from the current brief are:

- A refinement to the city vision to reflect the outcome of the recent public consultation;
- Introduction of development principles for each of five key themes;
- A re-structured approach to delivery to reflect:
  - city Centre priorities;
  - action for delivering these priorities; and
  - design criteria for key sites with development potential to guide future planning decisions.

### **4 Timetable**

4.1 Work to update the ICCDB is already underway but the precise timetable for issuing the draft brief for public consultation will be determined by the outcome of initial steps described in Appendix 2. It is proposed to present this timetable for approval at the next meeting of this Committee along with further progress reports on addressing City Centre priorities.

### **5 Implications**

#### **5.1 Equality and Environmental**

There are no known direct equality implications arising from this report.

Strategic Environmental Assessment has not been undertaken as the City Centre Action Plan would not be considered a qualifying plan, programme or strategy under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

#### **5.2 Resource, Climate Change, Carbon Clever, Legal and Risk**

Given the nature of this report, there are no direct implications immediately arising with respect to these matters. However, such is the subject matter that significant implications will arise and will need to be considered as integral to decision making going forward.

#### **5.3 Rural and Gaelic Implications**

There are no rural or Gaelic implications from this report.

## **Recommendation**

The Committee is invited to:

- agree that work proceeds on City Centre projects (as identified in Appendix 1) including improvements to cultural and tourism facilities, improve access and connections, and regenerate Academy Street;
- agree the proposed scope of the updated Inverness City Centre Development Brief presented in Appendix 2; and
- note that the timetable for publishing the updated brief for public consultation will be presented for approval at the next meeting of this Committee.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 20 August 2014

Author: Scott Dalgarno

1 Improvements to City Centre access and connections			
	Initial steps	Responsible service(s) / partners	Progress report
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope possibility for new walking and cycling routes, or highlight where existing infrastructure could be improved.</li> <li>• Analyse existing provision of cycle parking, hire etc., and highlight where there is potential for expansion or improvement.</li> <li>• Source opportunities and secure funding for additional or improved infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<p>Development and Infrastructure;</p> <p>HITRANS;</p> <p>SUSTRANS;</p>	<p>HITRANS are currently finalising an Active Travel map for Inverness which will be available in the next couple of months. They have also commissioned CH2M HILL to report on the potential implementation of interventions which were first established in the Active Travel audit published in 2011. The CH2M HILL report will help to highlight where there is scope for improvements to be made along with their anticipated complexity and cost, which was not apparent in the original report.</p> <p>Work began in July on the new Millburn Cycle Route, which is expected to take 18 weeks to complete. The route will form part of the proposed link from the new Inverness College UHI Beechwood Campus to the city centre via the recently constructed A9 overbridge, Raigmore Housing Estate and Millburn Road.</p> <p>A Carbon CLEVER Cycles scheme was launched on 18th August, making 12 electric bikes available for hire to the public. The bicycles can be propelled by pedals or powered by electricity, delivering power assisted speeds of up to 15mph. Storage lockers have been provided at Falcoln Square and Council Headquarters, each containing an e-bike, helmet, bike lock, hi-visibility vest, pannier and portable charger.</p>

2	<p>Options appraisal that investigates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential relocation options for the bus station (in order to use Farraline Park as a civic space).</li> <li>• Improvements to the existing bus station in terms of its connectivity with the train station should Farraline Park be maintained as the preferred location.</li> <li>• Possible improvements to the public and green space at the train and bus station.</li> <li>• Source opportunities and secure funding for additional or improved infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<p>Development and Infrastructure; Community Services; Transport Scotland; Stagecoach; Network Rail; HITRANS</p>	<p>Discussions have been undertaken with Network Rail and a draft design brief has been prepared to examine Inverness Rail Station and the 3 access points to the City Centre. The design brief includes the instruction to consultants to prepare an improvement strategy with a view to applying to the Scottish Stations Fund in 2015. Working collaboratively with Network Rail will be a key part of the strategy and subsequent bid.</p> <p>See 2(4) below.</p>
3	<p>Develop a City Centre Signage Strategy which will guide pedestrians and cyclists to key destinations through the most appropriate routes, including recommendations for infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>Key destinations for the strategy include Academy Street, the bus station, the rail station and the river.</p>	<p>Development and Infrastructure;  HITRANS</p>	<p>A commission to examine City Centre signage and wayfinding is underway. The initial study will benchmark the infrastructure within the City and compare the varying type of signs which exist. A survey of visitors will be undertaken as part of the commission to gauge their response to signage, and which they find useful or otherwise.</p>
4	<p>Maintain watching brief on opportunities to introduce Park and Ride facilities alongside future developments in Inverness and its surroundings, as recommended in the Inner Moray Firth Park and Ride Study (2008), prepared by Halcrow for HITRANS.</p>	<p>Development and Infrastructure;  HITRANS</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<b>2 Development of Academy Street and its surroundings</b>			
	<b>Initial steps</b>	<b>Responsible service(s) / partners</b>	<b>Progress report</b>
1	Secure Heritage Lottery Funding to support regeneration of Academy Street.	Development & Infrastructure;  Inverness City Heritage Trust;  Inverness BID	A Stage 2 application to secure £1.67M funding for the Townscape Heritage project is currently being progressed with a view to submitting early in 2015. Dialogue remains ongoing with the Inverness City Heritage Trust/Historic Scotland to secure circa £900k for the project fund. The project fund currently stands at £2.3M (£1.67M HLF Stage 1 Pass and a £630k Council contribution).
2	Coordinated action to maximise re-use of redundant city centre floorspace:  Purchase and develop 92-94 Academy Street as affordable housing.  Ongoing engagement with property owners based on recent surveys of vacant office and retail space.  Ongoing work to identify opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• secure funding from SG Town Centre Housing Fund and Regeneration Capital Grant Fund;</li> <li>• Use Empty Homes Initiative funding to bring vacant property into use.</li> </ul>	Development & Infrastructure / Highland Housing Alliance  Development & Infrastructure  Development & Infrastructure	Ongoing
3	Carry out a traffic modelling study to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse the capacity of city centre roads and junctions.</li> </ul>	Development and Infrastructure	A baseline traffic model (corridor model) of Academy Street has been produced with a view to option testing a number of scenarios for the City Centre.  It has been noted that almost 50% of the buses routing from

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess where areas of the city centre can be developed to optimise movement by all modes of transport.</li> </ul>		<p>the Bus Station to Academy Street perform a U-turn manoeuvre back towards Strothers Lane. This is an incredibly inefficient use of the capacity available, and only occurs due to the spatial limitations within the existing Bus Station. Options are therefore being considered for the Bus Station's reconfiguration which will increase the traffic capacity of Academy Street as well as allowing a more expedient route for buses to access the A82(T).</p> <p>Other traffic modelling options under consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrowing of Academy Street to two traffic lanes to allow the widening of footpaths and an enhanced streetscape.</li> <li>Removal of the pedestrian island between Union Street and Station Square, and instead allow a straight single pedestrian crossing facility.</li> </ul>
4	<p>Use traffic modelling study results to develop a Capital Programme project, consisting of a preliminary design and cost estimate, to improve street layout, circulation, and lighting on and adjacent to Academy Street.</p> <p>Seek funding from Capital Programme to deliver the project.</p>	Development & Infrastructure	<p>A consultant's brief is in preparation to develop a "place-making" proposal to improve the Academy Street and its surroundings, with a particular emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>achieving better balance and integration between pedestrians, street users and all forms of transport;</li> <li>up-grading Station Square;</li> <li>improving connectivity between Inverness bus and train stations and associated parking facilities.</li> </ul>

3 Redevelopment of key sites to create visitor and cultural attractions			
	Initial steps	Responsible service(s) / partners	Progress report
1	<p>Options appraisal for new city centre culture and visitor attractions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse appropriate uses and development potential of sites suitable for adaptive re-use;</li> <li>Identify relevant funding options.</li> </ul>	High Life Highland Development & Infrastructure	<p>The leadership of The Highland Council recently completed a review of the proposal for a new museum, gallery and library for Inverness and have decided this merits further detailed investigation. It is likely that the project will be taken forward by the Highland Culture Strategic board, a multi-agency body that was set up following the Highland Year of Culture in 2007, and is attended by HIE, Creative Scotland and Event Scotland. The board has formal approval as a body led by the Council. It includes opposition members and partner agencies, and so offers a number of advantages as a project vehicle.</p> <p><u>Inverness Castle:</u> Following a recent visit to Inverness Castle by Fergus Ewing, Scottish Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism, preparations are underway to establish a Working Group to look at the future of the castle if the Court Service quits the building. The group's remit and proposed membership (to include representatives from civic and public bodies) will be discussed at its first meeting, which will be chaired by Fergus Ewing and Council leader Drew Hendry, to take place this autumn.</p> <p><u>Inverness College UHI Midmills Campus:</u> The Scottish Futures Trust, acting for the Scottish Funding Council, will shortly advertise this site for sale on the open market. The Development and Infrastructure Service has instructed LDN Architects to prepare an outline feasibility study to consider the building's viability for adaptive re-use, along with the potential to develop housing elsewhere on the site.</p>



## Updated Inverness City Centre Development Brief: proposed scope

Introduction	
Background to update Outcome of public consultation Purpose of the brief	
Context	
City Centre Boundary Policy context	
Vision (from public consultation)	
A vibrant and unique City Centre on the river, well connected and accessible, and valued as an attractive place to live, work and visit.	
Key themes and development principles	
The city in the Highlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural heritage, including views &amp; approaches;</li> <li>• Built heritage: Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, urban grain;</li> <li>• Development principles</li> </ul>
Improving Movement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active travel</li> <li>• Public transport</li> <li>• Vehicular movement</li> <li>• Development principles</li> </ul>
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourist Attractions and Activities</li> <li>• Coach facilities</li> <li>• Development principles</li> </ul>
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail</li> <li>• Office space</li> <li>• Development principles</li> </ul>
Living in the City Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing &amp; future residents</li> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Student accommodation</li> <li>• Development principles</li> </ul>
Delivery	
Priorities for action:	
1. Movement/connectivity	Diagram & Action Plan
2. Academy Street	Diagram & Action Plan
3. New cultural/visitor attraction	Diagram & Action Plan
<b>Key sites:</b>	Diagram & design criteria for individual sites including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Station Square</li> <li>• Castle</li> <li>• Victorian Market</li> <li>• Inverness College: Midmills</li> <li>• Glebe Street</li> <li>• Inverness College: Longman</li> <li>• Farraline Park</li> </ul>