

Edinburgh City Centre Transformation

Final Strategy | September 2019



**This report presents the outcomes
of a yearlong project and extensive
public and stakeholder consultation.
It responds to feedback from the
consultation process of Summer 2019.**



Stay tuned & engage further

You can explore specific issues in more detail by viewing the Delivery Plan that accompanies the Strategy. See:

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/citycentrettransformation

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Foreword

Edinburgh is one of the best cities in the world to live, work and visit – vibrant with culture, history and opportunity. However, with our population set to expand rapidly over the next 20 years, we must act now to chart a course for future success. It is clear that we can't be complacent if we want to ensure Edinburgh continues to thrive in a truly sustainable way.

Our vision for Edinburgh's city centre is ambitious, informed by best practice and is firmly grounded in the aspirations of the people of Edinburgh. Through recent consultations, people have called for significant change to the way the city centre operates, placing outcomes for people at the heart of future change. We all benefit from a city centre that is inclusive, healthy and accessible.

Our proposals help focus attention on key areas of the city centre where radical change will help transform the way the city moves and operates. The proposals show what is possible, based on extensive research, to deliver the kind of city centre that people have told us they want. Our interventions set out the steps required to achieve transformative change: by improving city centre spaces for everyone, embracing active travel solutions, and refocusing the way key parts of the city function, we can create a city centre that will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits for all.

We have the opportunity to change Edinburgh for the better. We've seen how other cities around the world have improved their social fabric, quality of life and economy by transforming their city centres, and involving citizens in those changes. I am committed to delivering a successful city for our current and future population, by adopting a strategic and cooperative approach. I therefore invite you to help us finalise this strategy and vision through our consultation taking place during May and June 2019. We will then complete our City Centre Transformation Strategy and 10-year implementation plan, which will be published later this year.

I would also like to express my gratitude to everyone who has taken time to give their ideas and feedback so far, and look forward to ongoing dialogue with you as this project progresses.



Lesley Macinnes

Councillor Lesley Macinnes
Transport and Environment Convener
September 2019



1 Introduction

This Edinburgh City Centre Transformation (CCT) Strategy is the ambitious plan for a vibrant and people-focused capital city centre which seeks to improve community, economic and cultural life.

The vision: ‘An exceptional city centre that is for all, a place for people to live, work, visit and play. A place that is for the future, enriched by the legacy of the past.’

It outlines a programme to enhance public spaces to better support life in the city, by prioritising movement on foot, by bike and by public transport in central streets while improving access and opportunity for all. This is key to sustaining a thriving economy, and celebrating the city’s unique heritage.

Most of the enhancements in this Strategy are focused in six catalyst areas, where significant changes can achieve the greatest improvement in outcomes.

Across the whole of the city centre, changes over the next ten years, will deliver:

- **A walkable city centre** right at the heart of the World Heritage Site, enabled by a **pedestrian priority zone** and a **network of connected, high-quality, car-free streets**
- **High-quality streets and public spaces** where improvements allow for people to be inspired by the city’s unique heritage while they interact, relax or play
- A connected network across the city centre of **new segregated and safe cycle routes** to link communities and destinations, including the provision of a **new walking and cycling bridge** connecting the Old Town and the New Town

- Enhanced **bus priority** measures through the city centre, with improved traffic signal priority and rationalisation of bus stops to reduce bus congestion on key streets
- **A free city centre hopper bus** to support people moving around a city without a car, linking city centre communities
- The creation of public transport interchanges at key nodes of the city centre, to improve connectivity between rail, bus, tram and the new hopper service
- An accessible city centre where people, especially those with mobility restrictions, can overcome the city’s steep hills and explore its different street levels through **lifts or other forms of vertical connections** at key points in the city
- A reallocation of space in the city centre to reduce the impact of vehicles and free up space for other users, through a significant **reduction of on-street parking** with priority given to residents and blue badge parking where appropriate

These changes will make a direct contribution to addressing the challenges of climate change and poor air quality. As a result, they will support the goals of the Low Emission Zone project. They are supported by the City Mobility Plan and City Plan 2030, which will aim to implement complementary measures to significantly reduce unnecessary vehicle journeys through the city centre. In addition, the City Plan 2030 will aim to introduce policy measures, such as those to support residential communities in the city centre by restricting short-term letting services and promote a balanced approach to new residential and employment growth.



Call to action

To make the most of the opportunities presented in this strategy, **behavioural change will be critical**. Edinburgh's citizens have made huge strides: they walk and cycle more, have increased their use of public transport and reduced their levels of car ownership. However, to enable further improvements, behavioural change must be supported at every level

- The Council is uniquely placed to provide **leadership** and a **governance** structure which **integrates city activities** with a view to maximising benefits
- **Organisations** are ideally placed to change the way they operate and interact with the city and its users. The climate emergency creates a real drive for organisations to become carbon neutral
- Businesses, employers and education providers can do more to promote **sustainable transport** to their employees, students and suppliers
- **Communities and schools** have the opportunity to drive desired outcomes locally through on-the-ground activities and events
- Above all, individuals can continue to use their **influence** and **make personal choices** which support the **delivery of real change** in the city centre

This will not only ensure that the travel mode choices needed to make a success of this strategy are taken, but that everyone using the improved infrastructure of the city centre does so with a full appreciation and sense of respect for their fellow users, regardless of how they choose to travel.

Interdependencies

To be truly effective, the implementation of this strategy will need to be supported by policies and interventions across the whole of Edinburgh. This strategy has therefore been developed in close collaboration with the preparation of the City Plan 2030, City Mobility Plan and Low Emission Zone projects.

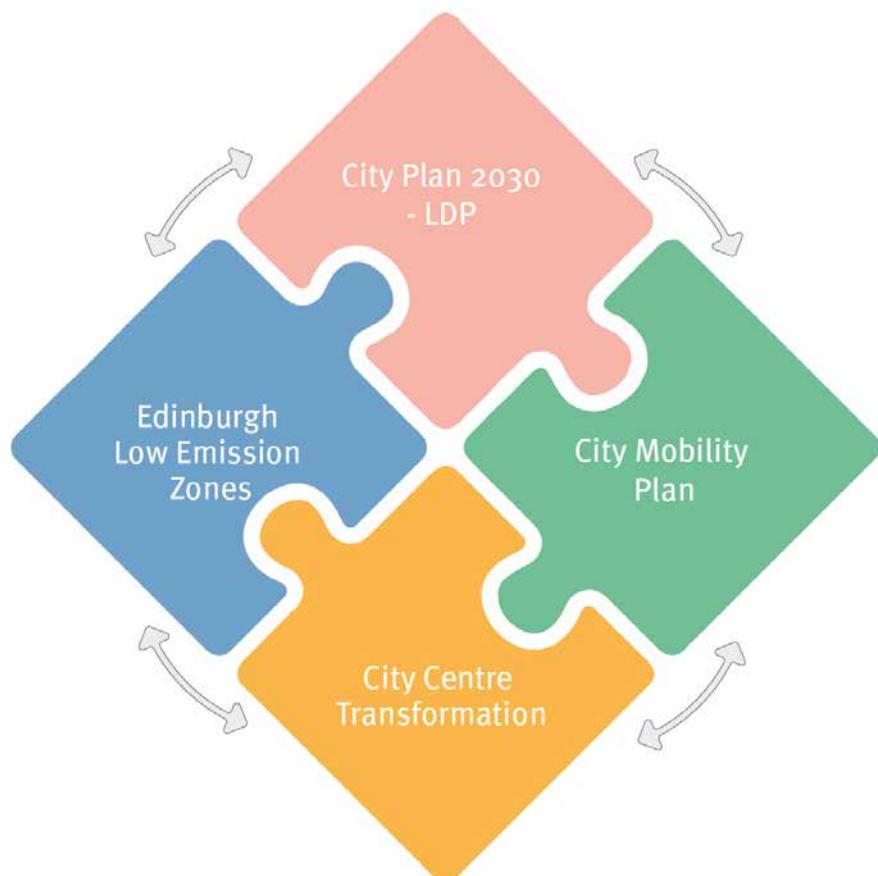
- **City Plan 2030** – the updated Local Development Plan that will ensure co-ordinated land and transport development across the city
- **City Mobility Plan** – the strategic framework for the effective movement of people and goods across Edinburgh, with associated action plans
- **Low Emission Zone** – the definition of restrictions that will apply to high-polluting vehicles to improve air quality outcomes in the city

Within this context, overarching aims and objectives have been developed for CCT that flow from the Edinburgh 2050 Vision and which are fully aligned to the three projects above.

From these aims, six Principles that guide the changes being driven by the strategy are set out in the Case for Change that follows.

This combined approach will ensure that the interventions within the city centre identified by this strategy are complemented by the wider measures needed across the rest of the city to make effective change. This will also ensure that the impacts of each project (such as the re-routing of traffic) can be effectively managed and mitigated at a city-wide level.

Each of these projects has been informed by a common understanding of public opinion through an extensive consultation exercise that was undertaken in 2018, which is summarised in the Case for Change that follows. Each project has then been developed using shared baseline data and analysis, a common approach to Strategic Environmental Assessment and an overarching process of governance within the Council's Place directorate, which have all ensured a fully integrated outcome.



“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

”

Edinburgh CCT Vision

The first phase of Edinburgh City Centre Transformation will see delivery of a number of key city centre projects co-ordinated within the ECCT spatial framework.

George Street and First New Town redesign



This project will deliver an exceptional street environment that is welcoming and accessible for all users, on George Street, Castle, Frederick, Hanover Streets and the junctions with Charlotte and St Andrew Squares.

The proposal will renew George Street's prime role within the New Town and strengthen links to the West End and St James quarter, making it more attractive for people of all ages to visit, shop, rest, and make active and sustainable travel choices whilst celebrating the New Town's unique heritage.

City Centre East-West Link



The City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL) consists of footway, cycleway and street improvements from Roseburn to Leith Walk. It will provide a family-friendly cycle link from west-east across the city centre and part of National Cycle Network (NCN) route 1. Part of the project will run through the redesigned George Street with new public space created at Melville Crescent and further public realm enhancements within the city centre at Haymarket, Randolph Place and Charlotte Lane.

Meadows to George Street



Meadows to George Street will transform the quality of walking, cycling, public spaces and improve access for all on some of Edinburgh's busiest historic streets: Hanover Street, the Mound, Bank Street, George IV Bridge, Candlemaker Row, Forrest Road, Bristo Place and Teviot Place. This will create safer, more attractive places to travel through and spend time in, including pedestrianisation of Forrest Road and linking cycle routes from the south of the city with CCWEL at George Street.

