



To: Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Carina O'Reilly

Report by: Head of Planning Services

Relevant scrutiny committee: Community 9/7/2015 Services Scrutiny Committee

Wards affected: Abbey Arbury Castle Cherry Hinton Coleridge East Chesterton King's Hedges Market Newnham Petersfield Queen Edith's Romsey Trumpington West Chesterton

CAMBRIDGE CITY CENTRE ACCESSIBILITY REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive summary

1.1 In 2014 a review was commissioned to gain a fuller understanding of the issues affecting ease of access in and around the city centre for a range of users but particularly pedestrians, disabled and wheelchair users. The review report was considered at the March Community Services Scrutiny Committee and the next step in this process was to develop a plan to support action on the conclusions of the review, to maximise the effectiveness of existing actions by partners and to inform future investment decisions that impact upon the accessibility of the city centre such as City Deal and other initiatives. This report considers the action plan and identified next steps.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- [1] To agree the action plan as set out at Appendix A, the identified future stages and timetable for implementation.
- [2] To ask officers to provide a progress report for Community Services Scrutiny Committee in early 2016.

3. Background

- 3.1 The City Centre Accessibility review was commissioned by the council to gain an objective understanding of accessibility issues in and around the city centre. The scope of the study was to undertake a baseline review of the accessibility of Cambridge city centre (looking at the Historic Core and Grafton areas as defined in the Local Plan 2014).
- 3.2 The review considered thematic and practical issues and the baseline assessment focussed on key parts of the city centre (historic core and Grafton areas). These were broken up into reference areas and specific streets were surveyed for accessibility issues. The study also considered the legal and policy framework impacting on the use and management of the city centre, the agencies involved and their varied responsibilities. Interviews and surveys were used to gain understanding of issues from a wide range of agency and user viewpoints.
- 3.3 The centre of Cambridge is already under pressure from the number of people using it and with the planned growth in population together with rising numbers of students and visitors this will only increase. The ability of the city centre to cope with the increase in numbers of pedestrians is constrained by its historic and generally narrow street pattern. The current County Council Transport Plan and emerging City Council Local Plan both refer to meeting the needs of pedestrians and to proposals for improving the quality of the public realm. The accessibility review has the potential to feed into the implementation of these plans and influence other initiatives such as City Deal which will be important for users of Cambridge city centre in future.
- 3.4 The main conclusions from the study were that parts of the city centre are difficult to access, particularly for disabled and wheelchair users for a variety of reasons including:
 - street obstructions; street furniture, street trading, Advertising boards, badly parked bikes, licensed activities, unlicensed activities and other 'clutter'
 - Public realm and maintenance – pavement widths, crossovers, obstructions, maintenance issues
 - Complexities in the different agencies involved in licensing and enforcement activities, and differing enforcement priorities
- 3.5 The Accessibility report made a number of recommendations for future action. These actions were varied in their ease of delivery, cost and complexity but focussed on:

- Addressing ease of accessibility by looking at street clutter and particularly how advertising 'A' Boards are dealt with in future
- Cycle parking and management of abandoned cycles
- Public realm investment and removal of surplus street furniture

The review action plan has been developed to address these key areas for intervention.

3.6 The action plan is set out at Appendix A to this report. The plan has been developed to focus on actions that can be delivered within a reasonable timescale and largely within existing budgets. Members are asked for their feedback on the actions and the timetable set out to take these actions forward. Officers propose bringing back an update report in early 2016 setting out progress in delivering on the various actions identified.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The action plan will be taken forward initially using existing budgetary provision and capacity in the service departments involved.

(b) Staffing Implications

Capacity will be needed to take forward the preparation of the action plan and to secure the future implementation of identified actions. This capacity will be found from existing budgets wherever possible or highlighted as a requirement in the action plan when brought back to Community Services Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

The accessibility review and action plan were not subject to EQIA.

(d) Environmental Implications

There were no adverse climate change implications from the accessibility review study and none are anticipated from the actions proposed in the action plan. Any measures to promote easier movement, access, walking and cycling activities in the city centre would normally be expected to be positive for climate change.

(e) Procurement

The procurement of the original study followed the council's procurement regulations. Any further procurement involved in delivering the action plan will also be undertaken in accordance with the procurement and financial regulations of the council.

(f) Consultation and communication

The accessibility study was circulated to stakeholders and interested groups who have been asked to give feedback to help inform the development of the action plan. The Access Officer and the Disability Consultative Panel have received a presentation on the review findings and meetings have been held with the Cambridge BID. Engagement with stakeholders will be undertaken as part of developing and delivering on the actions in the action plan. Officers from the City and County Councils have jointly contributed to the action plan development.

(g) Community Safety

There are no adverse community safety implications. Improvements to personal accessibility and the wider public realm are likely to have a positive effect upon access and public safety.

5. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

1. Report to Community Services Scrutiny Committee March 2015
2. Cambridge City Centre Accessibility Study 2015

6. Appendices

Appendix A – City Centre Accessibility Study 2015 – Proposed Action Plan

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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APPENDIX A: City Centre Accessibility Review Action Plan

	Issue	Category of problem	Specific Issue or problem area	Action proposed, responsibility and timetable
1	Street Obstructions	Proliferation of Advertising Boards	<p>Proliferation and enforcement of unacceptably located 'A' boards in the City Centre</p> <p>Develop proactive combined signage solutions with partners for selected streets where visibility is genuinely an issue for traders e.g. Green Street.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop new Policy for advertising 'A' Boards in the City Centre including consultation with stakeholders and communications about the introduction of this approach. Timescale - end of 2015. Lead Services: – Streets and Open Spaces and Planning Services 2. Adopt and implement new policy and promote voluntary removal campaign from Jan 2016 - Lead Service: Streets and Open Spaces with support from Planning Services and the County Council 3. Proactive communications approach with business community throughout – Lead Service: Streets and Open Spaces 4. Enforcement approach and criteria to be set out in the policy, identifying circumstances where voluntary removal has been unsuccessful <p>[Above actions: City Council has lead responsibility. Communications and enforcement with support from partners].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Work with Businesses and Cambridge BID to identify where pro-active solutions could be

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			developed by traders/property owners e.g. Green Street. City Council lead concurrent with policy development and adoption. Implementation depending upon proposals that can be developed. Funding to be sought from external sources.
	Cycles and cycle parking issues	Bicycle parking facilities	Particular issue in Sidney Street where cycle racks are accessed from the pavement. City Council to obtain quotation for reorientation of racks. Budget permitting City Council to commission reconfiguration of Sidney Street cycle racks by spring 2016.
		Abandoned cycle removal	Existing enforcement regime plus enhancements noted below
		Badly parked cycles	Current pro-active approach operated by the Ranger teams to be enhanced with additional publicity on how to report abandoned and/or badly parked cycles where blocking pavement or access – Rangers routine inspections in key streets and areas will pick this up. Additional publicity to be organised by Streets and Open Spaces.
	Licensed activities	Licensed cafes and outdoor seating areas add to vitality but also take up public space	Policy recently reviewed by the licensing authority (County Council) in consultation with City Council. No further action on this.
	Unlicensed	Peddlers and Punt	City Centre Management Group already established

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		activities	touts operating on city centre streets	(looking specifically at Peddler's and Punt Tout problems). No additional actions recommended.
		Street trading	Street trading pitches operate within the City Centre area	Up to date policy in place, no action recommended
2	Public Ream	Maintenance	Frequency and funding of maintenance of City Centre streets	<p>The City Deal City Centre Access and Capacity Project will be the main opportunity for the City and County Council to consider these issues. City Deal funding will be the main funding stream, along with any s.106/CIL contributions that can be secured. This City Deal project is now being initiated.</p> <p>City Centre Public Realm Strategy to be commissioned ahead of local Plan adoption to inform City Deal projects. City Council to commission public ream strategy to align with City Deal projects timetable. Environment Scrutiny Committee to oversee adoption of public realm strategy in 2016</p>
		Standards	Some areas fall below best practice standards for pavements and crossings	
		Quality	Quality of public realm in places, quality of maintenance of the public realm. Ability of public bodies to keep City Centre public realm maintained to a high standard	
		Investment	Lack of available investment for public	

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			realm enhancements other than as part of City Deal or s.106/CIL	
		Street furniture	No proactive approach to reviewing and removing old, abandoned and unnecessary street furniture including signs.	Brief for commissioning of Public Realm strategy to include audit of existing street furniture. Seek removal/replacement of abandoned street furniture following audit through City Deal projects or pro-actively with County Council as funds permit.
3	Management of streets and spaces	Co-ordination of management and maintenance activities in the City centre	Are the agencies involved optimising their joint activities, funding and problem solving interventions	Audit and review of existing arrangements. Develop and promote new collaborative working arrangements between partners and agencies if beneficial and will deliver improvements. Complete review by end of 2015 and report back to CSSC in early 2016. City Council to initiate review. Streets and Open Spaces and Planning Services to complete.