

# Future of the Castle Site

## Castlegate Levelling Up Fund project

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### November 2022

#### 1. *Why do we need the transform the Castle site?*

There are many reasons why the project has been a priority for many years. The Council has now secure funding to proceed with the scheme:

##### **Problems / Issues:**

- The Castlegate area has been in decline for many years;
- The Castle site, which was once home to Sheffield Castle and Castle Market has been boarded up since the demolition of the Castle Market in 2015.
- The site currently acts as a barrier to the regeneration of the Castlegate area as a whole and as a source of anti-social behaviour.
- Castlegate underperforms as a destination or as a business and employment area.

##### **Opportunities**

- Castlegate remains a main gateway into the City Centre and has many quality buildings and development sites, including some at the periphery of the Castle site;
- Growing new economic uses around Victoria Quays and technology and creative start-ups in converted buildings in Castlegate and the Wicker;
- Provide a new public space for the area, which will include a de-culverted and re-naturalised River Sheaf as well as space for events, play and relaxing;
- Prepare the city against extreme weather, flooding and drought resulting from climate change through the use of Sustainable Drainage;
- Increase the wildlife habitat and green space in this part of the City which will add to the Grey to Green network of spaces;
- Support the re-invention of Castlegate following the demolition of the Market through rediscovery of the Castle remains, hidden waterways and the interpretation of heritage.

#### 2. *What are the interventions included in the Concept Design for the Castle site project?*

The interventions of the scheme can be summarised as follows:

- 1) A **riverside park** will be created. The River Sheaf will be de-culverted and re-naturalised in this historic part of Sheffield. This concept will allow for a quieter and more nature focused area.
- 2) A **central route through the site** will be established which creatively responds to the site's challenging topography. It will provide a comfortable and clear route that will flow through the landscape. The route will be accessible, well-lit and it will provide an opportunity to reveal the medieval archaeology.
- 3) The creation of **Castlegate Common**, a central green area that reflects the past uses of this site as a bowling green in the 1700's. The area can be used for occasional events. High quality trees, shrubs and perennial planting will be established throughout the site as well as opportunities for Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs).

- 4) The creation of **opportunities for play and outdoor activity** to strengthen and enhance the area's contribution to The Outdoor City. People will be encouraged to explore and interact with the environment, from the riverside edge to the Castlegate Common.
- 5) **Revealing the major known archaeological treasures from Sheffield's Castle.** An opportunity is being investigated to allow various archaeological features to be showcased to the public.
- 6) The creation of an **area of hard surface that allows dramatic views of the River Don** from the top of the 'wall of Castlegate'. This elevated position will provide a feeling of scale and character can be used for cafes/commercial ventures as well as occasional street markets.
- 7) A **public art strategy** is being produced that will engage with local creative communities to both interpret the site's history and heritage in a creative way, alongside opportunities to look forward and embrace fresh ideas.

**3. Does the project require road layout changes or a formal Traffic Regulation Order legal process?**

Yes. Although the site itself is not part of Sheffield's public highway network, some changes to Exchange St (where it meets Exchange Place) are likely to be needed. These changes are linked to the servicing of the development plots.

As explained below, most interventions proposed will need planning permission

**4. Does the project require planning consent?**

Yes. All the interventions (except possibly for the River Sheaf de-culverting) require planning permission. The Council intends to submit a hybrid\* planning application as early as possible in 2023 to be able to achieve the Levelling Up Fund timetable. It requires that all works are completed by the end of March 2024.

The planning application process will take at least 12 weeks or more. So, all being well, with planning granted and the contractor procurement completed, we should be on site in summer 2023. Any delays in obtaining planning consent could delay the start on site.

\*A hybrid planning application means that the planning consent will approve all the detail of the landscape, access to the Castle site, public realm works, lighting, events space, riverside park to enable its construction. However, it will only approve the outline design for the development plots around the site, which will be serviced from outside the Castle Site and will be built at a later date.

**5. How much is it going to cost? Is all funding secured?**

We have secured funding from the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) the creation of the park, de-culverting the river sheaf, interpretation of the castle remains and creation of development plots. The concept design plan shows these elements but further work on the costs needs to take place before it is known for certain if everything can be afforded. Your responses to this consultation will also form part of this process.

It is also important to note that, although the Council's team will continue to cost the scheme at every stage of the design process, we will not know if everything can be afforded the works are procured next year (when contractor's will be asked to price the scheme). Similarly, regarding the maintenance costs for the new space (which will need to be funded by the Council as they are not included in the LUF grant), are still to be calculated.

In general terms, we will always aim to design a deliverable scheme to the budget available. If you would like to be kept informed of progress on the project, please provide your contact details on the on-line survey

**6. *Are the proposed works taking place outside my business or home? How will these be managed?***

Yes, the works are taking place in the vicinity of local businesses and apartments. The contractor for the scheme will keep local residents and businesses informed of the schedule of works and possible disruptions during its construction. We will try our best to keep disruption to a minimum.

In general, once the scheme is completed, it will help attract people to the area as well as improve the setting and amenities for people already working and living in this part of the city. This should result in further investment, as has happened in the Grey to Green Phase 1 and 2 areas and other areas with similar improvements.

**7. *Are local stakeholders supportive of the scheme?***

A common complaint from the local hotels, businesses and residents in the area is the poor environment that residents and visitors to the city have to walk through when they are trying to get to the City Centre. Although this has been improved by the completion of the Grey to Green improvements around the site in 2020, the 'boarded up' Castle Site is detrimental to the overall context of Castlegate.

We have also met regularly with other stakeholders in the area including the Castlegate Partnership, which support the overall principle and benefits of the opening up of the Castle site as an amenity and public space in Castlegate and the deculverting of the River Sheaf.

**8. *Does the project include demolition and digging up areas?***

There are a number of remaining structures on the site as well as large amounts of archaeology that need to be protected. There is also a 9 metre level difference between Castlegate (the street) and Waingate. So yes, there will be some demolition activity and lots of ground excavations and earth movements during construction! We also have to deculvert the River Sheaf and provide good soil for the planting and create the events' space. We will do this within weekday working hours and inform residents and businesses of any unusual working times/ days.

If you would like to be kept informed of progress on the project, please provide your contact details on the on-line survey.

**9. *When will the works take place?***

Subject to the outcome of the Public Consultation ending on 20<sup>th</sup> November (a report will be produced in December 2022), we plan to refine the concept design and submit a planning application in early 2023 (target is by the end of January).

Whist the project is in planning, we aim to complete the detailed, technical and construction drawings to be able to procure the works in Spring 2023.

The project would commence on site in Summer 2023. Construction is expected to be completed by end March 2024