



Lancaster City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy

Route Options Report: Executive Summary

SEPTEMBER 2020





Illustrative design work carried out by Planit-IE design practice on behalf of Lancashire County Council.

Executive Summary



This Lancaster City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy Route Options Report has been prepared by Lancashire County Council with the support of Lancaster City Council.

The aim of the strategy is to build upon and realise the vision for Lancaster city centre as outlined in the District of Lancaster Highways and Transport Masterplan (2016) and meet the requirement set out in the Bay Gateway Development Consent Order (DCO) to implement an

"Action plan [that] must aim to prevent road traffic growth within the central Lancaster area increasing to predicted "do minimum" levels between the opening and design years of the link road (thereby negating planned relief)"

Since the publication of District of Lancaster Highways and Transport Masterplan progress has been considerable, with the opening of the Bay Gateway and a major expansion of housing and employment proposed as part of Lancaster City Council's recently adopted Local Plan. As part of this expansion, Bailrigg to the south of Lancaster was allocated Garden Village status with an expectation of delivering over 3,500 dwellings.

As part of the March 2020 budget, the Government announced the prospect for substantial funding through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to implement a number of sustainable transport measures linking the new settlement to the city centre. Further to this, during this period there has been considerable residential growth within and on the periphery of the city centre. Most recently Lancaster City Council has declared a Climate Change Emergency with the intention of the district being carbon neutral by 2030 and in recent months restrictions imposed as part of the COVID-19 pandemic are leading to a reevaluation of how transport and, indeed, cities themselves will function in the post-lockdown era. Collectively these elements provide a once in a generation opportunity to begin the process of reimagining a city centre for the future, one that places sustainable transport at the heart of the city.

To achieve this, this strategy will be guided by the vision outlined in the District of Lancaster Highways and Transport Masterplan.



1.1 The Vision

In 2031 Lancaster city centre is a vibrant and successful core to the district, where earlier issues of poor air quality and congestion have been tackled. Pedestrians and cyclists can move around easily and freely, through safe and attractive public spaces. This is because the centre is largely free of traffic. There is much less through traffic and most of the vehicles that do need to be there are ultra-low emission. The city has become an attractive destination for visitors from near and far.



1.2 The Strategy

This report adopts a qualitative approach in an attempt to initiate a direction of travel to determine what type of city centre we want to see in Lancaster in the years ahead.

In doing so it adopts a framework set out by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) as part of its 'Creating Better Streets: Inclusive and Accessible Places', report. This framework provides an assessment of the current situation using the following 5 themes:

- Inclusive Environment
- Ease of Movement
- Quality of Place (Public Realm)
- Safety and Public Health
- Economic Benefit

After using this framework for an assessment of the current situation it develops objectives for an appraisal framework for 8 different route options for the city centre.



1.3 Baseline Assessment

The baseline assessment process started with a review of previous studies and policy documents that had been undertaken by or for the two authorities in recent years. This was followed by an audit of existing traffic arrangements and quality of public realm across the city centre. Partner engagement was a key part of progressing the study with officers from the two authorities meeting and collaborating on a regular basis. The following draws out the key points revealed through the evidence.



Inclusive Environment

- The gyratory creates a significant barrier between residential areas and the city centre core; this is compounded for those who are mobility or visually impaired.
- Elements of the western arm of the gyratory are not fit for purpose regarding pedestrian movements.
- Current crossings of the gyratory do not reflect pedestrian desire lines.
- Access from the railway station into the city centre is poor with a lack of priority for pedestrians leading to congestion at the King Street/Meeting House Lane Junction.
- To access the residential and industrial areas to the west of the gyratory (including tourism hubs such as Lancaster Castle and sustainable transport hubs like the Railway Station), a journey around the majority of the gyratory network is often the outcome.



Ease of Movement

- Access to the city centre on foot is restricted and key crossings into the retail core do not prioritise pedestrians.
- Cycle provision in the city centre is poor and this hampers longer journeys between housing and key employment sites.
- Whilst access to the city centre is good for vehicular traffic and pedestrian circulation is good within the core city centre area, the gyratory forms a physical barrier with high levels of severance limiting movements to the south, east and west of the city centre.



Quality of Place (Public Realm)

- Lancaster city centre has a rich history with an abundance of heritage assets. However, despite this, it is hard for residents and visitors to appreciate them due to the quality of the public realm and the impact of traffic.
- A number of key public spaces are not used to their full effect due to severance and the proximity of substantial amounts of traffic.
- In addition to the impact on key public spaces, the dominance of private vehicular traffic throughout the city centre prevents effective strategies for the creation of new areas of public space being pursued.



Safety and Public Health

- The district as a whole has the worst accident record in Lancashire with a significant number clustered within the city centre and in particular the gyratory.
- Lancaster city centre gyratory is a declared Air Quality Management Area. Without significant intervention to limit engine-based traffic within the city centre there will be little opportunity to reverse this and provide good air quality for residents.



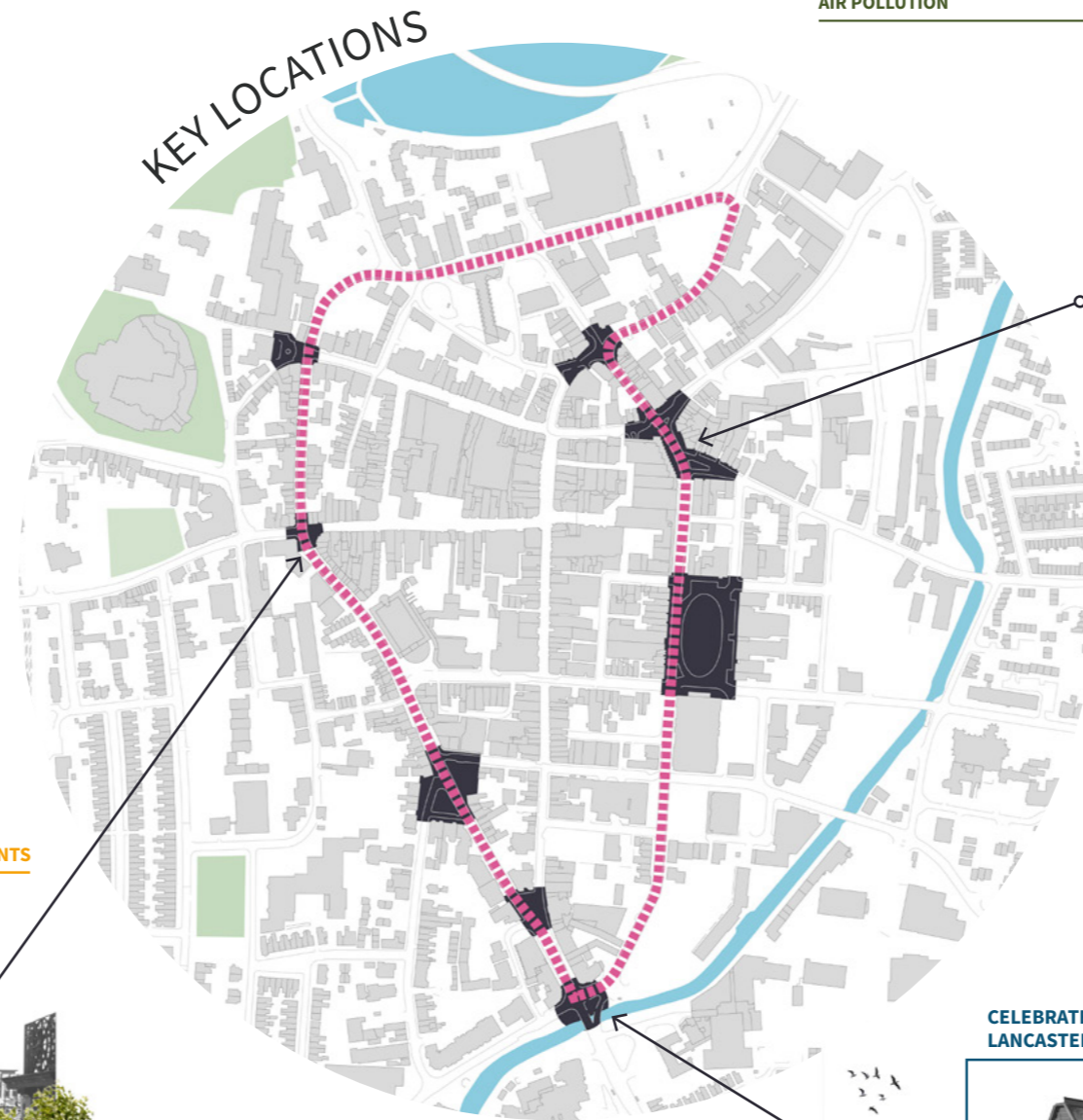
Economic Benefit

- Although Lancaster has a relatively strong retail offer and in recent years has started to make better use of its historic assets and public space for economic effect, these are unprecedented times for the high street.
- Current levels of parking provision in the city centre are counterproductive to any effort to encourage modal shift.
- Deliveries within the city centre have an impact in terms of congestion, air quality and safety because there is no coherent, integrated Delivery Strategy for the city.
- Taxis play an important role in the mobility needs of all residents but especially those without access to a vehicle.
- HGV access is problematic especially to key industrial sites to the west of the gyratory.

1.4 The Opportunities

To deal with the issues outlined in the baseline assessment and to begin the process of meeting our vision for 2031 we need to start thinking about how we can reimagine the city centre as a place that prioritises people, sustainable travel and quality of place.

The images shown here represent the type of opportunities that are possible within the city centre area with a reconfigured gyratory.



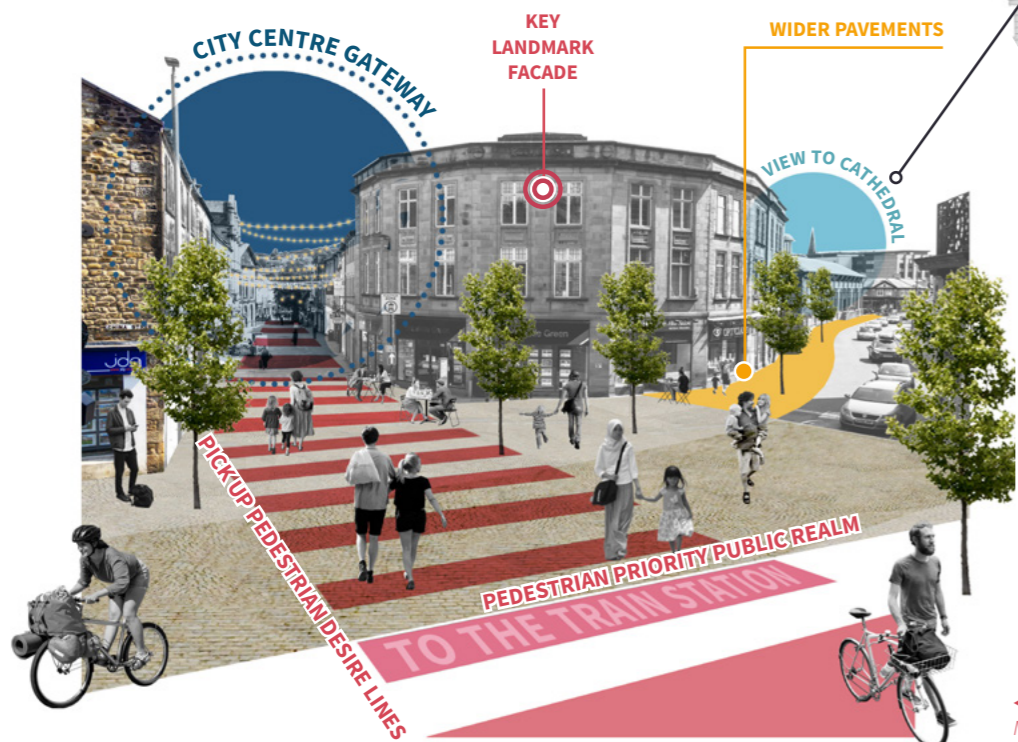
The opportunity at Stonewell / Moor Lane ▶

STREET TREES IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY AND REDUCE AIR POLLUTION

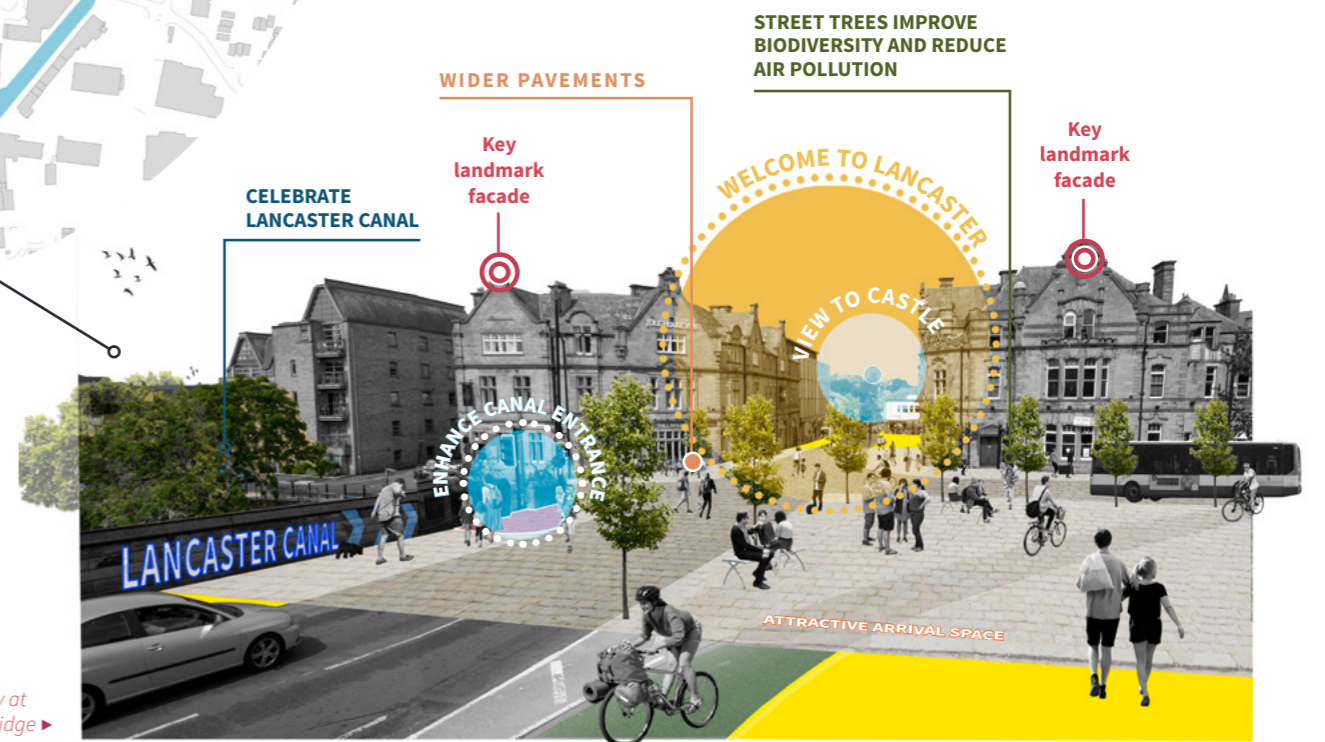


PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY PUBLIC REALM

WIDER PAVEMENTS ENCOURAGE SPILL OUT AND DWELL



◀ The opportunity at King Street / Market Street



The opportunity at Penny Street Bridge ▶

1.5 Appraisal Route Options

To realise such opportunities partners met to decide upon a variety of route options that could be tested against the appraisal framework. The following eight options were agreed and now form part of this consultation. On completion of this exercise, further analysis will support a narrowing of these options towards a preferred option which shall be presented for further community engagement.

1 Existing One Way Gyratory

Do minimum. To include changes to the Pointer Roundabout through funds already received through the Safer Roads Fund. The one-way gyratory system that is currently in place remains predominantly unaltered in form.

2 Two Way Gyratory

Proposes altering the gyratory away from its current one-way system, to allow two-way traffic for all modes. This would result in a shift away from two lanes of one-way traffic to two-way traffic on both arms of the gyratory.

3 One way gyratory for vehicular traffic with second lane dedicated to sustainable travel

A reconfiguration of the gyratory that maintains the current one-way direction, but reduced to one lane for general traffic with the second lane dedicated to buses, cyclists and emergency vehicles (also one-way).

4 Sustainable Travel Corridor East

Two-way traffic for all vehicular traffic on the western arm of the gyratory, with the eastern arm prioritised for buses, cyclists and emergency vehicles only.

5 Sustainable Travel Corridor West

Two-way traffic for all vehicular traffic on the eastern arm of the gyratory, with the western arm prioritised for buses, cyclists and emergency vehicles only.

6 No through city centre traffic

Limit through traffic in the city centre. The western arm of the gyratory would be two-way and would be closed to all traffic on King Street. King Street would be fully pedestrianised. The entire eastern arm of the gyratory would become two-way for buses, cyclists and emergency vehicles only.

7 Gyratory closed to through traffic except for exemptions

No part of the gyratory would be available for private vehicles for onward travel in any direction for an 11 hour period between 7.30am and 6.30pm six days per week (Monday-Saturday). Travel to the city centre and west Lancaster neighbourhoods would be permissible but travel through the city centre would not.

8 City Centre Clean Air Zone

The western arm of the gyratory (King St, China St, Bridge Lane, Cable St) would be subject to a £12 charge (monitored by automatic number plate recognition (ANPR)). The entire arm of eastern arm would become two-way for buses, cyclists and emergency vehicles only.

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