NOTTINGHAM CITY CENTRE

Time and Place Plan

Contents

We are already building on the opportunities and distinctive features of the City Centre...

Introduction

The City Centre is the 'shop-window' of the City and its success as an employment, retail and leisure centre is vital to the success of the City as a whole. It is the focus of economic growth and is the centre of our vision for a thriving and sustainable 21st century European city.

Nottingham is fortunate in that the City Centre is already attractive, well used and easily accessible to residents, customers and commuters. But there are still improvements needed - for example better managing the City Centre as a focus of evening entertainment and leisure as well as daytime employment and shopping. This plan focuses on best use of time and place in the City Centre - how the various areas can be used in different ways to meet the needs of the whole community.

Some of this plan's more ambitious proposals may not be achieved immediately - but we need to have a shared view of what to work towards. The Time and Place Plan creates a positive atmosphere for short and long-term action whilst still taking account of the realities of current market conditions. We know that finance is difficult for our partners in both public and private sectors, but we want to bring forward innovative plans to make the best of all our resources.

We are already building on the opportunities and distinctive features of the City Centre - for example the new Station Hub which will have trams, trains, taxis and buses in a new interchange with potential for surrounding office development; new digital enterprises in the Creative Quarter; and a new major tourist attraction at the Castle. These will be the 'triggers' for more action to revitalise the City Centre and create valuable buzz and energy.

The plan designates a new major development area - the Southern Gateway - as well as new City Centre Quarters, which are distinctive areas of character that are complementary to the main shopping core, each with different patterns of day and night time activity.

We also need to work on management. The City Centre caters for different people at different times, and sometimes these activities conflict. So regulation and management needs to be focused on making different activities work together. This includes parking enforcement, management of the Old Market Square, community protection and taxi and premises licensing.

The City Council will work with key partners such as the Nottingham Business Improvement District (BID), retailers, owners and developers. The Plan cannot be implemented by the City Council alone - it will involve many partners - all working to the shared vision.

Our vision is for a safe, healthy and vital centre, embracing new ideas, and building on the creativity of our residents, universities, employers and business people. We will also make best use of our assets - principally connectivity, in the form of a compact walk-able and cycle-able centre with excellent public transport and car parking; people, bringing creativeness, innovation and cultural advance; and history, with a series of important people and events reflected in an array of outstanding buildings and places. The key to success will be to work with the rhythm and grain of the City Centre, building on existing character and potential with better management and selective elements of change including, where possible, use of technology.

The City Centre has a long and distinguished heritage...

Current Situation

2

The City Centre has solid foundations, employing around 63,000 people and serving a shopping catchment area of 3.8m people.

Nottingham has long been considered the **primary shopping destination** in the East Midlands. Like all cities, it has been affected by the current recession and in particular some large developments that have not yet been built. This has resulted in more vacant shops, and a fall in national retail rankings. However, the City Centre's catchment area will grow considerably over the next 10 years as planned new housing is developed and the outlook is good - as long as the retail sector can respond to this challenge.

The City Centre is an **important office location** particularly for headquarters and regional offices. The sector contributes around £3bn to the local economy and employs over 20,000 people. Recent inward investors have included E.On, with 1,000 employees. However there is a shortage of Grade A offices, despite underused or vacant older blocks. Progress on the City Centre regeneration areas has been slow. Rents are relatively low, and in a recession confidence needs rebuilding.

Leisure is a key contributor to the City Centre economy, with 25% of commercial premises classed as leisure services. These restaurants, bars and cultural facilities complement the retail offer and enable customers to stay longer in the City Centre. There are also major venues, such as the Ice Centre, the Royal Centre, Contemporary Arts and Rock City.

The City Centre contains **major tourism attractions** as well as hotels, restaurants and other facilities aimed at the tourism market. However the Castle and the caves are some of many under-exploited tourist attractions that if improved would encourage more overnight stays in the City Centre.

There are a variety of **residential areas** in the City Centre, including well-established areas like The Park and more recent apartment buildings in the Lace Market, station area and near the Castle. 37% of the apartments in the City Centre are now occupied by students, and there is evidence of lower demand from non-student buyers or renters. There is still considerable market interest in further purpose-built student accommodation in the City Centre.

The further and higher education sector is also well represented. Nottingham Trent University, New College Nottingham and Central College, as well as other training providers such as Antenna, are important contributors to the City Centre economy, in generating expenditure, expanding their services and training people for entering the job market and becoming business people themselves.

The City Centre has a **long and distinguished heritage** and retains numerous historic streets, squares and buildings. However the Castle, the caves and the historic core are some of many under-exploited tourist attractions that if enhanced would encourage more overnight stays in the City Centre.

Public transport opportunities to access the City Centre are excellent and improving, with new tram lines and better quality bus services, as well as Park and Ride. However, **car parking**, both on and off street, has suffered from uncoordinated pricing policies. A new flexible on-street parking solution has been implemented, which needs to be matched to the off-street, Park and Ride and public transport offers.

Vision

Our vision is for a safe, healthy and vital centre, embracing new ideas, and building on the creativity of our residents, universities, employers and business people.

We will also make best use of our assets - principally connectivity, in the form of a compact walk-able and cycle-able centre with excellent public transport and car parking; people, bringing creativeness, innovation and cultural advance; and history, with a series of important people and events reflected in an array of outstanding buildings. The key to success will be to work with the rhythm and grain of the City Centre, building on existing character and potential with better management and selective elements of change including, where possible, use of technology.

In the longer term, the City Centre will:

- Be well-functioning and attractive, respecting historic buildings and spaces but also enabling development in suitable sites
- Be easy to get around with clear signing and maps, using new technology
- Achieve higher positions in national retail rankings, serving a large and growing catchment area, with improved and thriving shopping centres, starting with the Broadmarsh Centre, and including independent shop areas
- Have a ready supply of suitable offices for inward investors and growing indigenous companies
- Use the current transport investment to encourage complementary development
- Have improved public spaces including a well-established and well-used ‘tourism circuit’ that links the retail core to the Castle, Lace Market and the Station Hub
- Have developed many of the identified development sites
- Have a lively and well-managed evening economy that meets the needs of all sectors of the population
- Become smarter, taking advantage of technological advances, but still being welcoming and friendly

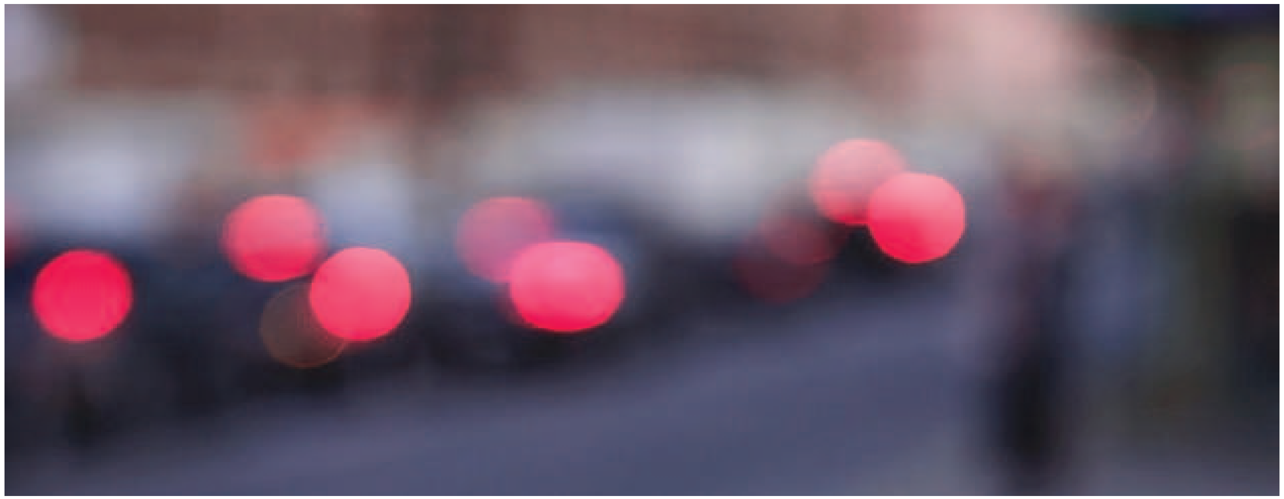
Vision

Strengths and opportunities

- Nottingham City Centre is already nationally and regionally significant, with good accessibility from other centres of population
- The City Centre’s compact form, character areas, walking links and excellent public transport provide a sustainable basis for future development, enhanced by current developments such as Lines 2 and 3 of NET
- Great progress has already been made in improving public spaces and bringing buildings up to date
- The City Centre already provides 63,000 jobs and the proposed Southern Gateway development could mean 5,000 more, supporting the City’s economic growth targets
- Recent studies conclude that there is considerable opportunity for retail and associated growth given the right strategy.
- The city centre night time economy is thriving and contributing significantly to the city economy as a whole
- There is a shortage of Grade A office space in Nottingham, with suitable development sites available in the Southern Gateway
- The Castle and its surroundings, including the canal, are a currently under-exploited tourism and leisure opportunity.
- Nottingham already has a good basis for a new and dynamic creative industries quarter, forming a lead sector in the Growth Plan, with faster broadband connections
- There are well established residential areas that contribute to the variety and character of the city centre
- The City Centre provides selected sites for purpose-built private rented and student accommodation, and the education sector generally is strong, with Nottingham Trent University and further education colleges all growing
- On-street parking pricing rationalisation has improved the perception of City Centre parking

Weaknesses and threats

- The national recession impacts badly, meaning that the Broadmarsh refurbishment has still not happened and the number of vacant shop units is relatively high (though falling).
- Wider scale issues such as the move to internet shopping also impact on the City Centre, meaning that it has fallen in various national retail rankings and competitor cities with new shopping developments have overtaken it
- In some key areas (for example, around some parts of the Old Market Square), investment in public spaces has not resulted in improved surrounding buildings or uses
- The large amount of transport investment in the city (NET Lines 2 and 3, Railway Station, A453, Ring Road, and Inner Ring Road schemes) is creating some disruption and congestion, with both real and perceived difficulties in accessing the City Centre
- Some desired national and established retail 'brands' are not present, with one reason quoted being the lack of larger shop units available
- The independent shopping areas in Hockley, Derby Road, Mansfield Road and others on the fringes of the City Centre are finding it difficult to remain viable and require additional help
- Although the evening economy contributes hugely to the City Centre, for many people it is not perceived as an attractive place to be in the evenings.
- Despite considerable improvements, walking routes around the City Centre and getting to key shopping and tourism destinations can be difficult (for example from the station to the Castle).
- Regeneration areas on the edges of the City Centre remain undeveloped



Framework

A combination of short term actions and longer term strategy is required to make a difference now as well as to 'join the dots' of development schemes that are already under way or will be happening soon, into a coordinated whole.

The future lies in a City Centre that can build on the identified advantages and at the same time tackle some or all of the identified weaknesses. It needs to build confidence but be realistic. This will be done by creating distinct quarters within the City Centre that can be used for the following:

- Increasing the legibility of the City Centre by means of branding, signing or specific initiatives
- Tackling particular issues by encouraging the transformation of places into character areas - for example encouraging café and restaurant development where that will complement the retail offer, so that people will be able to spend longer in the City Centre with a variety of activities easily available
- Encouraging particular uses in the areas that they are most appropriate - for example, tourism based around the City Centre's historic buildings and walkways
- Facilitating new development in places that best contribute to the character of the quarters
- Publicising the identified advantages of the City Centre - particularly its accessibility, history and creativity, and enabling it to better take up new opportunities
- Encouraging cross-fertilisation of ideas - for example ideas developed for the Creative Quarter are transferred and adapted to other quarters

This Plan sets out a framework of a retail core surrounded by quarters, which are the distinctive areas within the City Centre, connected by links making it easy to get around and access all parts of the City Centre.

Proposals are summarised here but are included in full in other policies and plans such as the Nottingham Local Plan, the Retail Strategy and the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy.

Framework

Assessment Themes	Current Situation	Proposals
Legibility and ease of walking around	Comprehensive pedestrian signs but not seen as distinctive and little information on preferred walking routes	Review City Centre signing to make it more distinctive and include quarters and links. More new technology to access information. Signage will include directions to daytime and evening attractions.
	Some areas are problematic eg station to City Centre, Collins and Canal Street, Milton Street	Re-emphasise City of Squares concept and related walking links. Develop programme of improvements
Accessibility (public transport)	Improving accessibility by tram (new routes complete by 2015)	Increase bus access to the City Centre, using Maid Marian Way, Canal Street and Bellar Gate North South links
	Some public buses access only certain parts of the City Centre, although the free connecting CentreLink service is popular	Secure further funding for CentreLink and consider extensions Consider potential for through routes
Accessibility (car)	Changes to on street parking seem to be successful but variable off-street provision	Develop coordinated parking strategy with partners to properly support City Centre shopping and leisure (include signing)
Accessibility (taxi and private hire)	Good availability but some issues of convenient access and service provided	Work with operators to develop a more coordinated and customer friendly service
Evening and night time economy	Some progress on shops opening later but much more to so	Continue to work with Business Improvement District to encourage shops to open later in evenings and enable complementary uses in appropriate places (eg cafes)
	Significant bar/club activity that is not easily managed and sometimes conflicting user groups across whole City Centre	Enable distinct areas that can be better managed – for example, Canal Quarter as bar and club area for evening activity. This requires co-ordinated action on planning, regeneration and licensing. City Centre planning guidelines to be produced for Licensing Committee use.
Street activation	Some good examples eg Broad Street outdoor summer cafes, but more potential in many areas	Allocate more areas for outdoor seating, cafes, markets and other active uses where possible
Heritage	Opportunities for heritage-led regeneration, especially in the Castle Quarter	Work with partner agencies and English Heritage to realise these opportunities. Create a Heritage Strategy.