



# Carlisle City Council

## Report to Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel

Meeting Date: 20 January 2022  
Portfolio: Economic, Enterprise and Housing  
Key Decision: No  
Policy and Budget Framework: No  
Public / Private: Public  
Title: City Centre Strategy  
Report of: Corporate Director of Economic Development  
Report Number: ED43/21

### Purpose / Summary:

The report provides an outline of the issues, challenges and trends affecting the vitality and viability of Carlisle city centre. It then provides an overview of the regeneration strategy and pipeline of projects that have been developed by the Council to respond to these.

### Recommendations:

Members are asked to consider the report, note its contents and provide views and comments.

### Tracking

|            |                 |
|------------|-----------------|
| Executive: | 20 January 2022 |
| Scrutiny:  |                 |
| Council:   |                 |

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. Amongst the various socio-economic impacts of Covid-19, one of the most visible is the impact on town and city centres and the contraction of the high street and the demise of several well-known high street retailers over the last eighteen months.
- 1.2. While some changes and challenges brought about by the pandemic are new, they are largely a continuation of pre-existing trends. City centres and the retail sector were already experiencing contraction as a result of changing consumer trends and shopping habits underpinned by the influence of social media and online shopping.
- 1.3. Covid-19 has rapidly accelerated the growth in online shopping as a result of lockdowns and shoppers' concerns in relation to visiting physical stores. Combined with increased levels of home working and reduced levels of commuting, city centres and high streets have seen both footfall and spending decline dramatically.
- 1.4. This report seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the issue, challenges and trends affecting the vitality and viability of Carlisle city centre – and the strategic framework and projects, for which government funding has been secured, that have been developed to respond to these. It begins by providing an overview of the performance of Carlisle city centre derived from the recently produced health check. It then follows with an overview of the strategy and pipeline of projects that have been developed to respond to the changes on the high street and the impacts on Covid-19. The following section provides an outline of the events programme in the city centre and the approach to growing the visitor economy. The final section provides an update on the progress of the Citadels project that is being funded through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

## **2. CHANGING ROLE OF CITY CENTRES**

- 2.1 Whilst retail shopping is a key factor in generating footfall, the most successful and resilient city centres are those that have evolved into community hubs containing retail, housing, cultural, education, entertainment, health, leisure and business uses. A blend of uses that generate different types of footfall - throughout the day and into the evening - maintains vitality and contributes significantly to commercial viability.
- 2.2 Another key element is that increasingly, consumers are looking for a leisure 'experience' and a greater sense of destination from city centres, where once they would have been simply visiting a range of shops. An attractive built environment with inviting, logical connections that link key destinations and attractions together can encourage more people to stay longer and keep coming back. Cleanliness, signage, lighting and the quality of public realm all have both direct and subliminal impacts in this regard.

2.3 The impacts of Covid-19 and the hastened shrinkage of the retail function of town and city centres have reinforced the importance of having vibrant and multifunctional high streets. The future role of city centres has fundamentally and permanently changed, with less emphasis on retail and shift towards a more multifunctional role that serves local communities, visitors and businesses. This, in turn, has instigated renewed policy from the government with a strong focus on driving long-term diversification and transformation of urban centres.

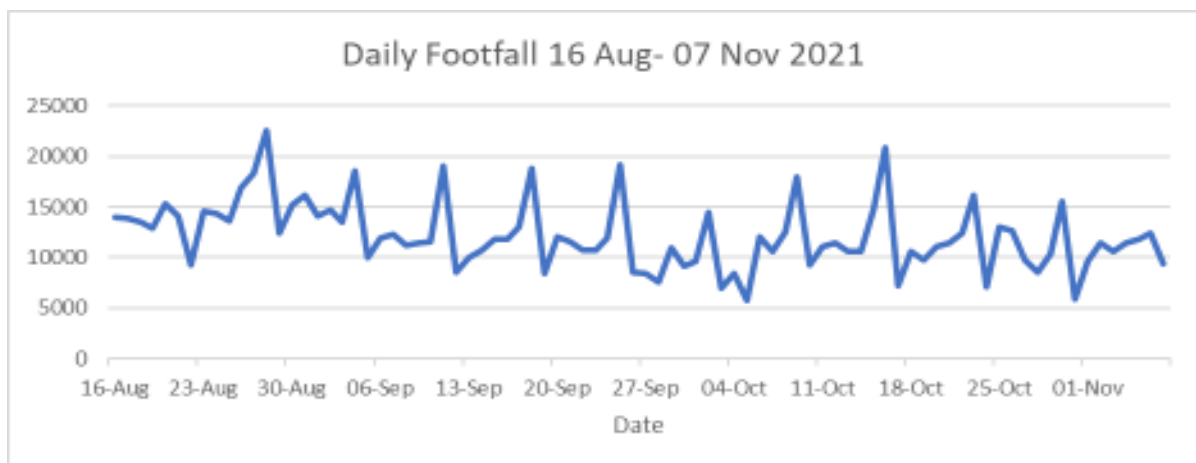
### 3. CITY CENTRE PERFORMANCE AND HEALTH CHECK

3.1 The Health Check for the City Centre was completed in November 2021 in line with national planning policy guidance. The health check aimed to assess city centre vibrancy and recovery after the effects of covid 19 on high street businesses. The health check assessed the following factors: diversity of uses, vacancy rates, footfall and pedestrian flows, environmental quality, crime and commercial property performance within the city centre.

#### 3.2 Findings:

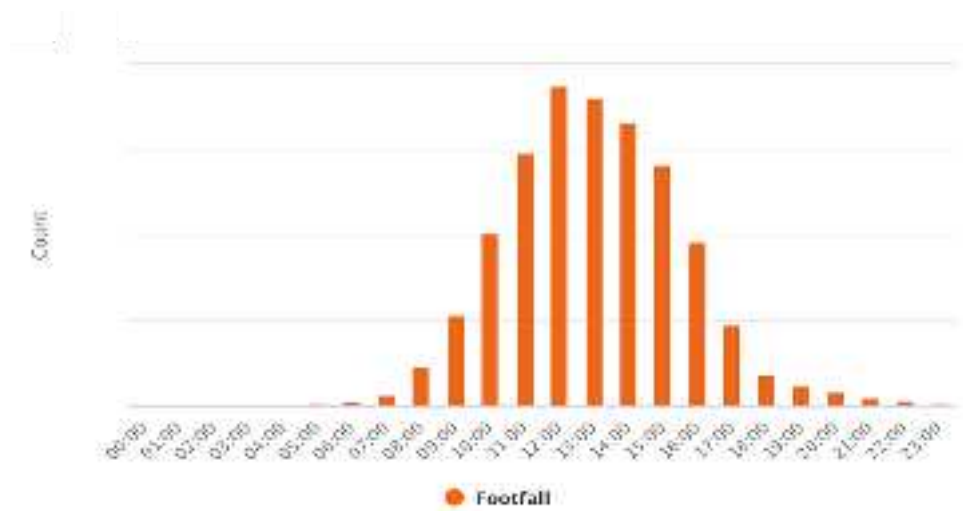
##### Footfall

The health check found that overall footfall peaks on Saturdays with the average Saturday footfall measuring 19,000, approximately double the average footfall of 9,300 on a Sunday. The weekday (Mon-Fri) average is 12,500 per day; approximately two-thirds of the Saturday footfall. When the health check was completed in November, weekly totals had declined since a mid-August high of 112,761 to a more subdued weekly average footfall rate approximately 80,000.



Moreover, the health check found that the hourly distribution of this footfall was highly centred around the midday peak with steep growth and decline in footfall on either side of this peak. After 5pm, there was marginal footfall presence in the city centre. It should be noted that this footfall data was measured using the council's footfall tracker based

on Scotch Street. Therefore, it is likely that this evening effect is more dramatic than it would be in other parts of the city centre.

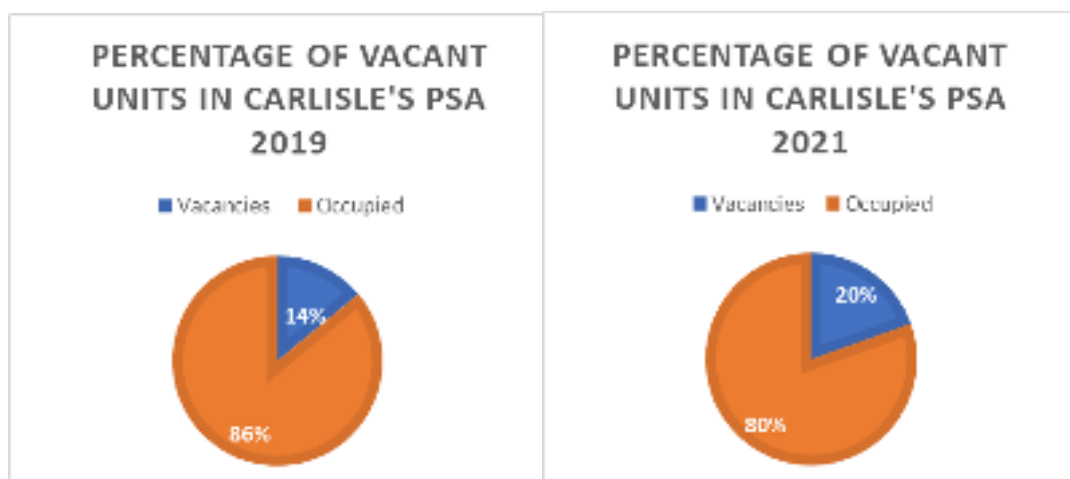


### Diversity of Uses

The report found that the percentage of commercial units that were used for comparison retail purposes had contracted since 2019. Comparison retail units were down 3% from 61% in 2019 to 58% in 2021 in the PSA (primary shopping area). On the other hand, other commercial uses within the PSA had increased, for example cafes and restaurants had grown from 9% in 2019 to 12% in 2021.

### Vacancy Rates

The report found that the Vacancy rate within the PSA (primary shopping area) has increased notably by 6% from 14% to 20% within the PSA. Carlisle's vacancy rate within the wider city centre area has also risen from 12% to 19%. The North West average vacancy rate was 17.8% in the first half of 2021 (this includes retail parks and shopping centres). The ONS has predicted that vacancies would continue to rise into second half of 2021. Therefore, this demonstrates that Carlisle is following a national trend of increasing vacancies.



## **Public Realm and Environmental Quality**

The health check found that the public realm is mostly unchanged since its 1989 pedestrianisation. Moreover, there are issues around pedestrian and consumer experience on Devonshire Street, due to its traffic. However, the city centre has strong heritage assets like Market Hall, Cathedral and the Citadels. The report noted that, repeatably, stakeholder engagement has raised the issue of the poor public realm of Botchergate.

## **Commercial Property Performance**

The last assessment of Carlisle's average rateable value was carried out in 2017. At the last evaluation, Carlisle's average rateable value of non-domestic properties stood at £24,000 annually; lower than the North West average of £25,000 and the England average of £34,000 (Valuation Office Agency, 2017). Therefore, until the next assessment by the Valuation Office Agency (due in 2022), it is hard to ascertain the effects of covid-19 on the commercial property performance in the City Centre.

## **Crime in the city centre**

The report found that, during the pandemic, city centre crime dropped to a 5-year low. The report found that, as the restrictions were lifted during the summer, crime also started to rise. The crime types of violent crime (violence and sexual offences), anti-social behaviour and shoplifting are the three most common crime types which, in all, constitute just over two-thirds of all crime.

## **4. DIVERSIFYING THE CITY CENTRE**

- 4.1 While the city centre has a strong sense of place, there is evidence that it lacks the vibrancy necessary to perform to its full potential as a regional hub. The following issues need to be addressed:

### **Reliance on retail**

- 4.2 Carlisle, as the hub for a dispersed, rural region, relies heavily on its retail offer in its city centre. However, the retail sector is facing challenges at a national level, and while Carlisle has not suffered, at least to date, as greatly as some urban areas however, employment is falling in this sector. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the retail sector are likely to impact Carlisle substantially. Vacancies in a number of key "anchor" sites and premises have undermined the overall vibrancy of parts of the city centre. For example, along Castle Street, Hooper's department store – a retail anchor institution that encouraged footfall to this part of the city centre - closed in 2012 and has remained unoccupied since. This over-reliance on retail makes Carlisle's economy sensitive to changes in shopping habits and customs. One option open to Carlisle,

unlike many towns and cities, is to further develop its city centre leisure and tourism offer, making more use of the strong historic assets it has.

### **Underperforming leisure and evening economy**

- 4.3 Only 9% of businesses in the city centre retail core contribute to the evening economy<sup>1</sup>. This means that city centre vibrancy is significantly reduced after 5pm, with local residents identifying that the isolated streets in the evening can feel threatening.

### **Lack of city centre residential community**

- 4.4 Only 4,250 people live in the city centre area. The 'offer' of housing in the city centre is generally perceived to be low and particularly unsuitable for young professionals, the largest market for city centre living in the country<sup>2</sup>. The absence of a strong city centre residential community contributes significantly to the lack of evening activity. Increasing city centre living will also help create a greater demand for the city centre evening economy, as more people will live close to shops and bars, and therefore the city centre operates as a neighbourhood- as per the principles of a '15 minute city'<sup>3</sup>

### **Underperforming visitor economy**

- 4.5 Carlisle has a relatively weak visitor sector when compared to other small cathedral cities, such as York, Norwich and Lincoln. Between Carlisle 241,000 visitor trips, against 356,000 in Lincoln, 633,000 in Norwich and 1.24 million in York<sup>4</sup>. Despite its beautiful location and strong heritage offer, Carlisle is clearly underperforming as a visitor destination.
- 4.6 Improving vitality and viability of the City Centre - through the diversification of uses and improving the residential, leisure and culture offer - is therefore a priority. Without intervention and a focussed strategy, the city centre could experience an accelerated decline in footfall and increased vacancy rates. This would have a significant impact on the Carlisle's role as a regional economic hub, the strength of the local economy – and income to the Council via business rates.

## **STRATEGY**

- 4.7 The Council's role in supporting the diversification of the City Centre is one of facilitation, in terms of creating the right environment to support and catalyse the process. This requires involvement by the Council at

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<sup>1</sup> Carlisle city centre Health Check, 2019

<sup>2</sup> BBC (2018) 'The UK's rapid return to city centre living' available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44482291> [accessed 27.02.2020]

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.15minutecity.com/> [accessed 10.12.20]

<sup>4</sup> Mott Macdonald, 2020

- The strategic level with the Economic Strategy that seeks to ensure that Carlisle remains a competitive and attractive location for businesses to invest and.
- The operational level with the City Centre Action Plan and supporting actions outlined in Sections 4.11 - 4.12 below.

4.8 In terms of the Economic Strategy, the overarching objective set out in the Council Plan is growth – both population and employment. Drawing on the evidence of needs, challenges assets and opportunities, the following six priorities have been identified for the Economic Strategy, along with key actions for delivery.

- Priority 1: driving housing and population growth
- Priority 2: grow target employment sectors and level the skills base and productivity
- Priority 3: increasing city centre vibrancy
- Priority 4: enhancing digital and transport connectivity
- Priority 5: supporting rural development and innovation
- Priority 6: promoting Carlisle as a place to live, work and visit

### **ECONOMIC STRATEGY PRIORITY 3 - FOCUS**

4.9 For the strategy of driving housing and population growth to succeed, Carlisle needs to be an attractive place to live, work and visit and the city centre plays a key role in that overall offer. A vibrant city centre that functions as a hub for cultural, leisure and economic activity is a prerequisite for a younger demographic and therefore, key to increasing the working age population.

4.10 Increasing the mix of uses in the city centre will generate different kinds of footfall through the day and into the evening and increase the perception of vibrancy. The shift from a retail centre to a multifunctional hub will enhance the overall experience of the city centre and reposition it as a visitor destination.

### **CITY CENTRE ACTION PLAN**

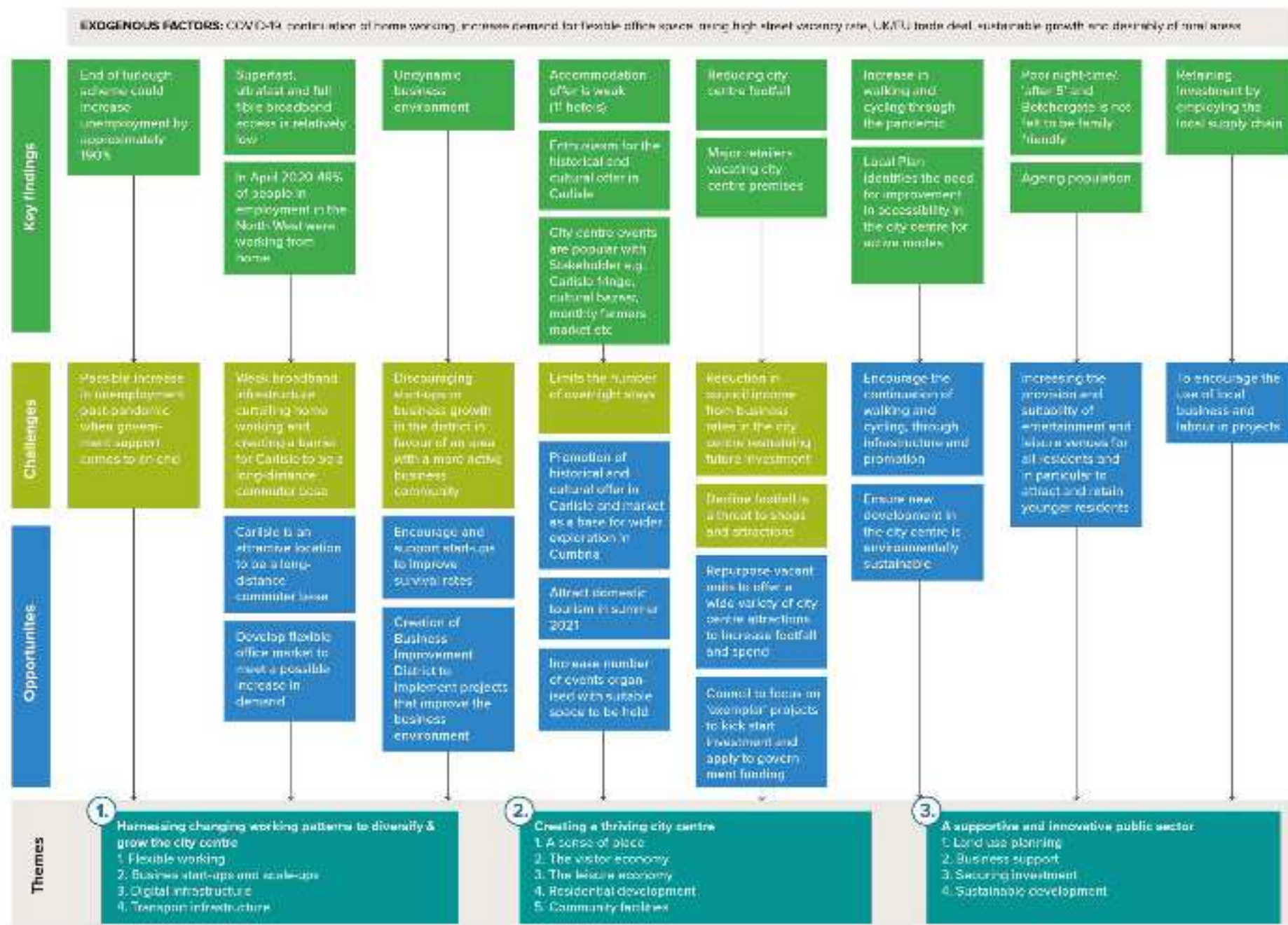
4.11 The City Centre Action Plan and Investment Framework has been produced following baselining exercise, trends analysis, stakeholder engagement process and policy review. The main findings were identified and the opportunities and challenges they present were then developed into three key themes for investment:

- Theme 1 – Harnessing changing working patterns to diversify and grow the city centre.
- Theme 2 – Creating a thriving centre for residents and visitors.
- Theme 3 – Ensuring a supporting and innovative public sector.

4.12 Below is a summary of the key findings, opportunities and challenges and how these relate to the confirmed and pipeline projects that deliver against the themes.



## Summary of Key Findings, Opportunities and Challenges (Source: Mott MacDonald, May 2021)





## Investment Framework and Related Projects

| Investment Framework Themes  | Sub-themes  | Related confirmed projects<br>(Future High Streets Fund, Carlisle Town Deal, Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal)  | Related pipeline projects<br>(Carlisle Town Deal)  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Theme 1: Harnessing changing working patterns to diversify &amp; grow the city centre</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Flexible working -supporting flexible working arrangements</li> <li>2. Business start-ups and scale-ups – strengthening Carlisle's enterprise culture</li> <li>3. Digital infrastructure -providing world-class digital infrastructure</li> <li>4. Transport infrastructure -improving network performance and journeys by non-car modes</li> </ol>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repurposing of 6-24 Castle Street – reuse of vacant listed buildings (FHSF)</li> <li>• Reconfiguring Devonshire Street – improving transport (FHSF) infrastructure</li> <li>• Carlisle Station Gateway– improving transport infrastructure (Borderlands)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citadel Business Infrastructure project.</li> <li>• Digital skills and community learning hub</li> <li>• Market Hall improved business interaction and space</li> <li>• Start with the Park – green and active travel routes</li> <li>• Southern Gateway– improving transport infrastructure</li> </ul> |
| <b>Theme 2: Creating a thriving city centre for residents and visitors</b>                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A sense of place-repurposing and revitalising the city centre</li> <li>2. The visitor economy –expanding and marketing Carlisle's visitor offer</li> <li>3. The leisure economy –bringing vibrancy to the city centre, in particular the evening economy</li> <li>4. Residential development –attracting and retaining a greater city centre population</li> <li>5. Community facilities –strengthening an inclusive community feeling in Carlisle</li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public realm improvements to Market Square and Devonshire Street (FHSF)</li> <li>• Redevelopment of Central Plaza site (FHSF)</li> <li>• 6-24 Castle Street repurposing (FHSF)</li> <li>• Caldew Riverside site remediation (Carlisle Town Deal)</li> <li>• Citadels Project – University campus (Borderlands)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved entrance to Tullie House</li> <li>• Upgrade to the Market Hall.</li> <li>• Lighting up Carlisle</li> <li>• Digital skills and community learning hub</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Theme 3: Ensuring a supportive and innovative public sector</b>                           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Land use planning –diversifying land and property use in the city centre</li> <li>2. Business support -supporting business resilience, growth and innovation</li> <li>3. Securing investment -supporting investment applications for both public and private sector</li> <li>4. Sustainable development -ensuring post-pandemic recovery is environmentally conscious</li> </ol>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repurposing of 6-24 Castle Street (FHSF)</li> <li>• Development of the former Central Plaza site (FHSF)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citadel Business Infrastructure project.</li> </ul>   |

## FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND

4.13 In August 2019 the City Council was invited by the government to develop a strategy for the city centre and a business case for investment from the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF). A business case was prepared and submitted in July 2020 that set out a vision to create a vibrant and multifunctional city centre. The primary strategic objectives of the bid were:

- Renewing Carlisle city centre as a place to live, work and visit.
- Reactivating Carlisle's Historic Quarter.
- Catalysing Carlisle's leisure and night-time economy.

4.14 The City Council were awarded £9.1m (including programme management costs) to deliver four projects that contribute to these objectives:

| Project name   | Type                                      | Project outline  | Funding    | Status   |
|--|---|--|------------|--|
| Reimagining Market Square (Green Market / Old Town Hall) | Public Realm / Leisure / Events Space     | This project that will enable the space to be better utilised and become more of a focal point for residents and visitors by installing infrastructure that will allow the space to host temporary or pop-up events.   | £2,380,000 | Currently completing Grant Funding Agreement with Cumbria CC to enable delivery of the project |
| Repurposing 6-24 Castle Street                           | Leisure / Culture / Business Support      | The listed buildings of 6-24 Castle Street are currently vacant and owned by the City Council. Funding has been secured that will enable the phased refurbishment of the buildings and bring them back into use.   | £1,130,000 | Tender for survey work to be issues Jan 22   |
| Preparing Central Plaza site for redevelopment           | Urban Regeneration                        | The funding that has been secured for this project means that a number of redevelopment options have become viable. These options are currently being progressed, with a view to commencing the delivery of a preferred scheme during next financial year 2022-23. | £4,740,000 | Specialists contracted to explore viable options for the site                                  |
| Pedestrian enhancement of Devonshire Street              | Public Realm / Leisure / Business Support | Carlisle city centre's emergent night-time cluster focussed on Devonshire Street, Lowther Street and Warwick Road. This funding will enable works to be carried out to create more space for people to walk and the  | £490,000   | Currently completing Grant Funding Agreement with Cumbria CC to enable delivery of the project |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  | businesses having the potential to create outdoor seating areas. |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|

## CARLISLE TOWN DEAL

- 4.15 In October 2020 Carlisle's Town Deal Board, a private-public partnership made up of key organisations across Carlisle, including Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria LEP, the University of Cumbria and Tullie House submitted the Carlisle Town Investment Plan (TIP) to government, which secured £19.7 million of public investment (including programme management costs) for the city. An additional £1m was secured through the Capital Accelerated Fund, which brought the cumulative total to £20.7m.
- 4.16 The TIP, which was shaped by the local community as a result of two rounds of public consultation, set out the following strategic objectives:
- SO1: GROWING CITY - To grow the working-age population of Carlisle and expand the business and employment base, through investment in housing, business growth, high-quality job creation, and education & skills.
  - SO2: VIBRANT CITY - To increase vibrancy and activity in Carlisle city centre, creating a thriving community of students, residents, businesses and workers using the centre for education, housing, work and leisure activities, during the day and into the evening.
  - SO3: CONNECTED CITY - To make Carlisle a highly accessible and connected city, supporting growth by making it easier for residents, workers, students and businesses to arrive at and move around the City.
  - SO4: DESTINATION CITY - To grow Carlisle's visitor economy, attracting additional footfall, vibrancy and spending to the City.
  - SO5: RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE CITY - To enable Carlisle's businesses, people and communities to be resilient to economic, social and environmental challenges including climate change, economic exclusion and unemployment, digital exclusion, and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.17 The Investment Plan sets a strategy for growth in the city over the next ten years, and includes 9 projects that will be delivered using the Town Deal funding:

| Project name  | Type  | Project outline   | Funding    | City Centre Project | Status                       |
|---|---|---|------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Start with the Park, St. Cuthbert's Garden Village        | Leisure / Green Space                       | The 'Start with the Park' project will provide the 'Greenway' a connective, multi-modal green travel route connecting the key settlements of SCGV with Carlisle City Centre and providing a high quality leisure and recreation facilities. The project will position SCGV as a unique and attractive destination for working-age families. | £2,000,000 | No                  | Business case in development |
| Southern Gateway  | Highways / Public Realm / Walking & Cycling | An integrated programme of investments in active and sustainable travel and public realm to better connect key, including the Railway Station, Citadels, Devonshire Street and the former Central Plaza site, and to connect St. Cuthbert's Garden Village with the City Centre.  | £6,600,000 | Yes                 | Business case in development |
| Project Tullie: Welcome & Entrance to Tullie House Museum | Leisure / Culture                           | Part of a wider programme of investment at Tullie House Museum, this project will better connect the Museum to the surrounding streetscape, increasing its visibility by providing a clear and contemporary point of arrival for visitors.  | £918,000   | Yes                 | Business case in development |
| Lighting Up Carlisle                                      | Leisure / Culture                           | Investment of capital funding in digital lighting equipment to support an expanded and transformed events programme.  | £620,000   | Yes                 | Draft business case produced |
| Digital and Community Learning Hub                        | Education / Skills / Learning               | Refurbishment of the City Centre Library to create an accessible digital skills and community learning hub, and installation of digital equipment and training  | £2,350,000 | Yes                 | Business case in development |

|                                  |                                       |   |            |     |  |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|------------|-----|--|
|                                  |                                       | materials in 13 community venues.   |            |     |  |
| Citadels Business Infrastructure | Education / Skills / Business Support | Part of a wider development scheme to bring a new University campus on the grade I listed Citadels site, this project will create a purpose built hyper fast digitally enabled business interaction and accommodation space, linked to the University of Cumbria's flagship campus development. | £4,000,000 | Yes | Draft business case produced   |
| Carlisle Market Hall             | Leisure / Culture / Business Support  | Investment to improve the infrastructure and internal structure in the Market Hall to improve the experience for shoppers and visitors and exploring options to create a food court and events space.   | £3,015,000 | Yes | Business case in development   |
| Caldew Riverside Remediation     | Urban Regeneration / Housing          | Investment to remove on-site contamination and prepare the site for residential development   | £850,000   | Yes | Site investigations works completed – remediation strategy in production |
| Bitts Park                       | Leisure / Green Space                 | The creation of a mod village to provide improved leisure facilities within the Park and promote increased usage  | £150,000   | Yes | Mod units installed; site operational                                    |

## CARLISLE CITY CENTRE TASKFORCE

4.18 Alongside the FHSF and Town Deal activities, the Council has also established the City Centre Taskforce, which is made up of key city centre-based organisations to identify the challenges and opportunities the city centre faces and ensure local leadership for the city centre as it moves towards economic recovery following the impacts of COVID-19, and the delivery of significant city centre investment.

4.19 The Taskforce is chaired by Carlisle City Council's Portfolio Holder of Economy, Enterprise and Housing and its role of is solely to act as an engagement group. It does not have any formal decision-making status and would provide feedback to the Carlisle City Council on such matters including but not limited to:

- a) The development of the regeneration projects in Carlisle City Centre, including Borderlands, Future High Street Fund and Town Deal projects.
- b) Highlight city centre specific issues that will be reported to the Council
- c) Identify further/future opportunities for Carlisle's growth and development
- d) Support the City Council in formulating new strategies and plans for the city centre and seeking additional funding.

4.20 The Taskforce will support greater collaboration working in the city centre, generating new ideas and gaining different perspectives on city centre economic issues. Carlisle has does not have a Business Improvement District which has meant there is a gap in collaboration working for the city centre. The Task Force ensures that an effective collaboration body for the city centre exists, to support the plans and funds for the city centre coming forward, creating a strong forum for engagement across a range of projects.

## **5. CITY CENTRE EVENTS – PROGRAMME AND PIPELINE PROJECTS**

5.1 Carlisle's limited leisure and evening economy had led to a perception of a lack of vibrancy and this has resulted in the city not establishing itself as a visitor destination. This is in spite of the high volume of tourist numbers to the Lake District and Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Sites that are in close proximity and the rise of the staycation market in 2020 and 2021. Carlisle possesses heritage assets of national significance such as Carlisle Castle, Cathedral and Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery – which are comparable with other similar-sized historic cities in England such as York, Chester and Lincoln.

5.2 Carlisle's heritage is central to improving its offer as a tourist destination. However, improvements and interventions that add to the overall 'offer' and create a more vibrant city centre scene will help attract more visitors. Therefore, the city centre strategy involves strengthening and expanding the evening economy. This includes delivering a family friendly events programme. The rationale for this is that these events would encourage longer dwell time in the city centre and encourage people to visit other attractions and businesses, such as shops, leisure and cultural attractions and restaurants.

5.3 The City Council has secured over £6m for funding for projects to support the delivery of an improved events offer in the city centre, with £2.38m being secured from the

Future High Streets Fund for the Market Square project (see Section 4.6) and £620,000 and £3m from the Carlisle Town Deal for the Lighting Up Carlisle and Market Hall projects respectively (see Section 4.9).

### **Lighting Up Carlisle**

- 5.4 Carlisle's most notable sites provide a superb backdrop for feature lighting, which would enhance their presence and strengthening the city's historic core. Evening lighting is already installed across various locations however, the Council recognises that there is scope to diversify this in a way that highlights areas of architectural and historical interest, illuminates pathways and supports the delivery of cultural events across the city.
- 5.5 The Lighting Up Carlisle project involves capital investment in digital lighting equipment. The installation of themed and seasonal lighting will illuminate key landmark and heritage buildings (e.g., Cathedral, Castle, Market Hall) making these landmarks and buildings more prominent to visitors and enhancing the attractiveness of the city centre. The infrastructure will be future-proofed, allowing the latest technologies (i.e., digital projection) to be exploited. The lighting will act as a backdrop to - and support - an expanded and transformed events programme in the city centre over the next few years including Hadrian's Wall 1900, City of Lights and Winter Wonderland events.

### **Carlisle Market Hall**

- 5.6 The indoor market currently underperforms relative to its latent potential and has failed to diversify and adapt to the changing environment, high street trends and new consumer and visitor habits. However, other UK towns and cities have demonstrated how market halls can be transformed to provide new and locally distinctive attractions that bring more residents and visitors into urban centres for leisure activities.
- 5.7 The Carlisle Market Hall project involves capital investment to refurbish the Grade 2 listed indoor market hall to create a distinctive local produce food court and entertainment / performance venue. The project will create a new destination in the city, giving visitors, local families and young people new reasons to spend time and money in the city centre.
- 5.8 The objective of these two projects is to encourage more people to come to the city centre for events, leisure and entertainment - that will generate linked trips with shopping. This is central to the strategy to increase footfall, boost vibrancy, and support the growth and diversification of the evening economy.

## **6. Citadels Project Update**

- 6.1 Redevelopment of Carlisle Station Gateway and Citadels is a strategic project within the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. The Citadels project aims to redevelop a 1.65 hectare site of historic importance to create a new city centre campus for the UofC.



The site is in the combined ownership of Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council. As joint landowners, the City and County and Councils are key partners in enabling the development of the project.

- 6.2 The City Council has worked closely with University of Cumbria (UofC) and the County Council from the project inception to the point at which Borderlands funding was secured following submission of the full business case. Delivery of the project is being led by UofC, who will be the recipient of Borderlands funding (£50m) as well as contributing £23.5m of their own funding. A further £4m is to be provided via the Carlisle Town Deal.
- 6.3 The Citadels project includes the refurbishment of the Grade 1 listed Citadels rotundas, the redevelopment of the Old Gaol site (buildings on English Street and Victoria Viaduct) and the construction of new buildings behind. The following images provide the most up-to-date visualisations of the scheme and are work in progress towards the submission of the planning application that is scheduled for early 2022. Pre-application discussion is continuing between the UofC, Historic England and the City Council as the local planning authority.





- 6.4 The objectives targeted through the Citadels project are:
- Improve the skills and productivity of the workforce - addressing the productivity deficit across the area and improving overall economic performance.
  - Improve the inclusivity of growth – by extending access to higher education opportunities.
  - Raise the profile of Carlisle/Borderlands – by bringing back into full use this key gateway site with a high-quality building.

- Increase footfall in the city centre – to help counter the wider trends leading to a decline in high street shopping faced by Carlisle city centre and so help support the vitality and vibrancy of the city centre.
- Improve the overall attractiveness and liveability of Carlisle as a city – this relates to helping improve the city centre making the university’s cultural facilities much more accessible and usable by Carlisle’ residents and increasing the University’s economic, social and cultural footprint in the city.

- 6.5 The business case for the new campus estimates that this proposal will deliver 164 extra full-time equivalent jobs by 2035/36, 380 net additional jobs by 2040/41 and boost the economy of the Borderlands region by £118m (Gross Value Added). In approving the Borderlands funding for this project, Government recognised that that the forecast benefits represented good Value for Money.
- 6.6 The proposed campus would have a transformational impact on Carlisle city centre, creating a new HQ for the UofC, high quality and fully digital enabled teaching spaces, a business exchange / interaction space, a multi-purpose lecture theatre, a café and a new publicly accessible square.
- 6.7 The new university campus in the heart of Carlisle would provide enhanced access to skills and educational opportunities for local residents. The project is strategically important in terms of supporting the future growth of the city and the university, stimulating economic activity in the city centre and increasing skills and business productivity in the wider Borderlands region.

## **7. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 This report has provided a comprehensive overview of the issues, challenges and trends affecting the vitality and viability of Carlisle city centre – and the strategic framework and projects, for which government funding has been secured, that have been developed to respond to these.
- 7.2 Since early 2019, the Council’s regeneration team has been developing the strategy to catalyse and drive the diversification of the city centre. This strategy has changed and adapted over this time in response to emergent challenges, however the impacts of Covid-19 have been profound, which has resulted in a new focus on recovery and consolidation of the high street.
- 7.3 The Council has developed a good portfolio of projects that will achieve the objectives set out in the Economic Strategy, City Centre Action Plan and Carlisle Town Investment Plan. Over £100m of funding has been secured through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal to enable their delivery.

## **8. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES**

- 8.1 The successful implementation of the strategy and the city centre projects will support the delivery of the vision set out in the Carlisle Plan, which is to enable Carlisle to grow and prosper as the capital of the Borderlands region.
- 8.2 The projects to be delivered through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal will contribute directly to the priority of delivering inclusive and sustainable economic growth, by making Carlisle a more attractive place for investment. They will also contribute directly to the priority of improving health and well-being, by making Carlisle a great and safe place to walk and cycle.

**Contact details:**

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**Appendices attached to report:**

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Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

**Corporate Implications:**

Legal - This report provides an overview of the various projects which are underway or proposed to improve the vitality of the City Centre. It is not intended to provide a detailed update on each project; however, advice is provided by legal services to the project team in order to ensure compliance with grant conditions and other legal requirements.

Property Services – No property implications

Finance - The Council has been successful in being awarded two significant funding amounts to help revitalise the City Centre. The Future High Street Fund (£9.1m) has been added to the capital programme for the individual projects to be delivered (either directly by the Council or through the provision of a capital grant to the County Council for works to their assets). The Town Deal funding (cumulative £20.7m) will be subject to Business Case approval by DLUHC prior to the individual projects being added to the Council's capital programme for delivery. Further reports to the Executive will be required to agree the projects and allocation of funding.

Equality - None

Information Governance-