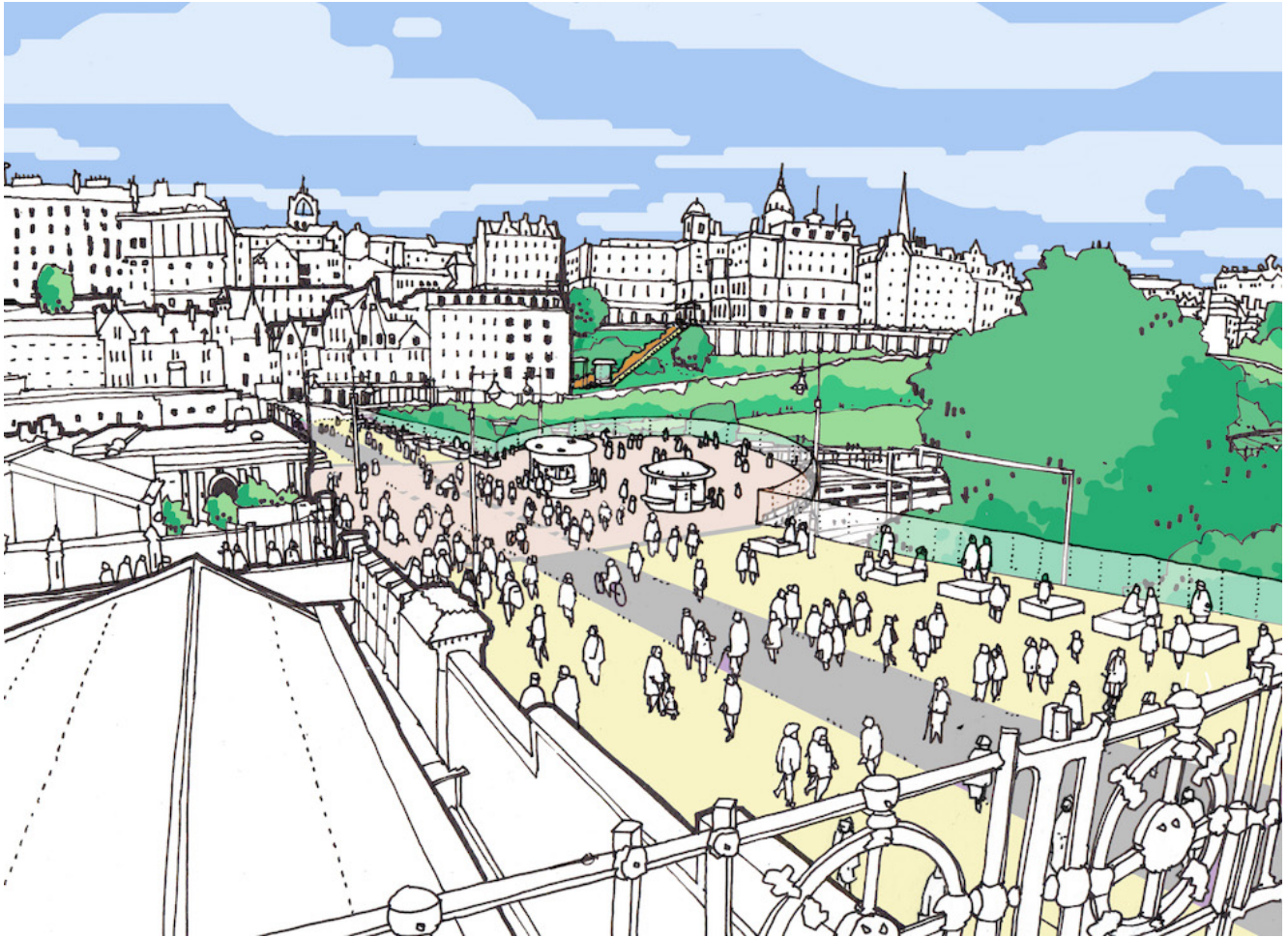


Transformation plans for city centre criticised

Council urged to 'stop playing SimCity with city centre' over transformation plans

Opponents have called on transport chiefs to “avoid playing a game of SimCity with the city centre” over radical proposals to change how people move about the Capital.

Last week, the council revealed its 10-year vision to overhaul the city centre – including a tram loop, a hopper bus service, a new bridge for cyclists and pedestrians over the Waverley valley and a lower volume of buses stopping on Princes Street.



Waverley Bridge to be zoned for pedestrians

The draft strategy, which is yet to be costed, also includes gradually reducing parking in the city centre and installing four lifts to help people move between the Old Town's two levels. Waverley Bridge, currently used by taxis and airport buses, would also be closed to traffic and turned into a plaza.

Conservative councillors on the city council said they will not oppose the public having their say on the proposals – but have issued a warning over the impact the plans, as they stand, could have on city centre businesses. Lothian Buses have already stated the changes are “likely to have a substantial impact on our current operations and finances”.



Cllr Nick Cook

Conservative transport spokesperson, Cllr Nick Cook, said: “Conservatives support practical, realistic improvements to

how people move around and enjoy our world class city centre in the 21st century.

“While we won’t oppose public consultation on the SNP/Labour administration’s proposals, the council must avoid playing a game of ‘SimCity’ with the city centre that will have significant consequences for Edinburgh’s economy.”

Under the [city centre transformation proposals](#), a longer stretch of the Royal Mile is set to close to traffic, along with Victoria Street and Cockburn Street. More priority would be given to pedestrians and cyclists in the city centre – while cars will be “treated like guests” in prominent parts of the Capital.

Cllr Cook added: “While the city centre transformation promises ‘radical’ change, ideas like a largely pedestrianised Royal Mile have actually been bandied about for over a decade with cross-party support.

“But others, such as the closure of Waverley Bridge and vastly reduced traffic capacity on Lothian Road are far less practical and could have a hugely negative economic impact on the city economy, inconvenience working people and visitors, as well create operational pressures and financial difficulties for Lothian Buses.”



Cllr Lesley Macinnes Convener of Transport and Environment
Responding to the claims, Transport and Environment convener, Cllr Lesley Macinnes, welcomed cross-party support for proposals for the Royal Mile.

She said: “These exciting proposals for the transformation of Edinburgh’s city centre have received support from organisations across the country for their bold and innovative nature, so I find claims that they are not radical enough quite remarkable.

“Residents have told us that that they want to see real change in the way we use our city, and that’s exactly what city centre transformation sets out to do. Our strategy document builds on an extremely complex package of work and research aiming balance the different needs of the public while envisioning a more liveable, welcoming and resilient environment for generations to come.”

She added: “There will be further consultation on this strategy, starting next week, which will further refine the final shape of what we will undertake.

“It’s heartening to know that such interventions as pedestrian priority on the Royal Mile would receive cross-party support,

as these are some of the key elements in our bold and far-reaching plan to reshape the city, creating a city centre that will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits for all.”