

Council moving along with George Street project

The council plans to convert George Street from what the council's Transport Convener regards as a giant car park which cars drive through into a destination.

These plans have already been years in the making, and now the council is moving along with these to the next stage of design. Councillors will be asked to approve the latest version of the plans at the Transport and Environment Committee next Thursday.

The £36 million project is now £4 million more expensive than it was when originally drawn up just ahead of the pandemic. This is quite simply a reflection of inflation.

If they are approved this will allow the project to move to the next stage and to construction starting in 2024.

Most vehicles will be banned from the street for most of the day in what Cllr Scott Arthur the Transport Convener describes as a world class project. The 240 car parking spaces on George Street will be removed. He noted one particular aspect when he explained: "something that we've put a lot of thought into is protecting the safety of people, particularly lone women in the evening as they travel home from some of the bars and restaurants."

As to the feel of the street Cllr Arthur said: "Fundamentally, this is going to be about creating a space where it can be

just like Princes Street Gardens where people can sit on a bench have a sandwich at lunchtime and watch the world go by.” The councillor also explained that the street will become a bit more upmarket and he hoped that this will be reflected in better paid jobs for local people as well as it becoming somewhere for everyone to go to.

The council has also consulted with the Edinburgh City Centre Business Improvement District, Essential Edinburgh, who are supportive of the plans both as an idea and in the practical way they can help to make it work when complete.

There will be delivery windows to allow businesses to take delivery of stock between 7pm and 10am Monday to Saturday and 7pm to 12pm on Sundays. There will be spaces for blue badge holders – more than there are at present and there will be special dispensation for taxis – although the specific details of how that works are yet to be finalised. The council says the final operational plan will reflect the needs of hotels and businesses on the street.

The street will become pedestrian and cycle focused, and will have obvious benefits to wheelchair users when the George Street to New Town (GNT) project is complete.

Cllr Scott Arthur, Transport and Environment Convener, said: “This is a major milestone for a flagship project to transform Edinburgh’s city centre, where people will be put first and the economy will be supported. We will transform George Street from a place which is dominated by cars to one which is dominated by people.

“The latest proposals build on years of public and business engagement, all of which has improved the design. As part of this stage of development the project team has carried out a significant package of in-depth assessments to address GNT’s impact on residents, businesses, public safety and the economy, amongst other factors, and to ensure final designs

take varied needs into account.

“Once complete, GNT will deliver a world-class city centre worthy of a European capital, highlighting Edinburgh’s stunning architecture and creating a safe space for people to spend time in. By supporting sustainable travel by foot and bike, as well as retaining public transport links, it’s also key to the Council’s plans to reduce travel by car and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2020.

Karen McGregor, Scotland Director, Sustrans, said: “Sustrans is proud to be a funding partner for the George Street and First New Town transformation. The design proposals are the result of extensive public engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. The project will facilitate walking, wheeling, cycling and sustainable transport in Scotland’s capital. But more importantly, it will create a greener, healthier place with people at its heart, where they can relax, socialise, shop, work and enjoy Edinburgh’s beautiful surroundings.

“If recommendations are approved by Transport and Environment Committee, the project will progress to Stage 4, which sets out key processes required for its delivery. This includes the promotion of all necessary statutory processes, such as Traffic Regulation and Redetermination Orders, which will allow construction to commence in 2024. This stage will also deliver the final Operational Plan.”

GNT is one of the first projects to be delivered as part [Edinburgh City Centre Transformation](#) and intersects with other key schemes supporting travel by foot, wheel or bike in the city centre, including [Meadows to George Street](#) (MGS) and the [City Centre West to East Link \(CCWEL\)](#) which is already under construction. It will also fit in with the council’s newly announced Circulation plan which allows for more room for active travel and public transport.

The council papers for the Transport and Environment Committee

are on the council [website](#).





