



Elgin City Centre Draft Masterplan

March 2021

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Foreword

by Councillors Graham Leadbitter and David Bremner

We are delighted to introduce the draft Elgin City Centre Masterplan and to take the opportunity to thank Elgin BID, Elgin Community Council and other partners who have helped shape the projects within the draft Masterplan.

The draft Masterplan sets out a vision aiming to transform Elgin City Centre with a range of projects aiming to support local businesses, attract investment, regenerate vacant and derelict buildings, encourage more people to live and work in the Centre, to showcase Elgin's fascinating history and to improve walking and cycling connections.

The Moray Growth Deal funding from both Scottish and UK Governments will accelerate regeneration and bring significant investment through landmark projects such as a new Business Enterprise Hub, refurbishment and extension of Grant Lodge into a new regional visitor attraction and the extension and refurbishment of Elgin Town Hall into a regional multi-purpose entertainment and creative industry centre. These are exciting projects which will support and create jobs and provide new learning and training opportunities.

We encourage everyone with an interest in helping Moray to recover, prosper and flourish to read the Masterplan, look at our online exhibition at www.moray.gov.uk/ECCMP, and let us know what you think of the proposals or what other projects you would like to see included.

We want to move forward and deliver the projects with local businesses and the local community and in doing so, support delivery of other Council initiatives including the recently approved Climate Change Strategy as well as maximising benefits for the local economy.



Councillor Graham Leadbitter
Leader of Moray Council



Councillor David Bremner
Chair of Planning and
Regulatory Services



Contents

Introduction	1	CR13 Public Realm Action Plan	41
How to respond to the draft Masterplan	2	CR14 Lanes	46
Developing the Masterplan	3	CR15 Batchen Street	48
Vision and Objectives	4	Cultural Quarter	
The Masterplan	14	Introduction	50
Core Retail Area		CQ1 Elgin Town Hall - The Moray Creative Arts and Entertainment Centre	51
Introduction	17	CQ2 Grant Lodge- Moray Food and Drink Heritage Experience	54
CR1 Active Travel Connections - Removing barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement	19	CQ3 Proposed Hotel	56
CR2 Bringing Vacant/ Derelicts Sites and Properties Into Reuse	21	Cooper Park	
CR3 Former Victorian Market between High Street and South Street (Junners/Jailhouse)	23	Introduction	59
CR4 Sustainable Travel Interchange and Infrastructure	25	CP1 Gateways	60
CR5 Properties above M&Co.	27	CP2 Education, Health and the Environment	62
CR6 A96 Frontage	28	CP3 Play & Recreation	64
CR7 South Street	30	CP4 Sports Hub	66
CR8 Poundland	32	CP5 Pond	67
CR9 Shopfronts	34	CP6 Outdoor Performance Area	69
CR10 North Port	35	CP7 Elgin Library Café Extension	70
CR11 Moss Street	37	Other Projects	
CR12 Batchen Lane (Northfield Terrace Car Park to Thunderton Place) and Thunderton Place	38	OP1 Roundabouts, Gateways, and Entrances	71
		OP2 Former Sawmill and Auction Mart sites, Linkwood Road	72



Introduction

This draft Masterplan seeks views on a long term programme of aspirational projects to ensure Elgin City Centre is a prosperous, attractive and healthy place.

The draft Masterplan has been prepared as a partnership between Elgin BID, Elgin Community Council and Moray Council. The Covid-19 pandemic swept across the world as the draft Masterplan was being prepared and the pressures which social distancing, homeworking and lockdown measures have placed upon individuals and businesses has had a significant adverse economic and social effect, giving even greater momentum to the need for strategic planning, partnership working, investment, co-ordination and adaptation to changing circumstances. This Masterplan is intended to create a land use framework to help support the economic recovery of Elgin City Centre.

Many of the issues and opportunities identified in the Masterplan have been discussed and debated before, however this Masterplan will be the long term vision for co-ordinating and driving action forward to address these issues and to deliver the projects, which will collectively achieve the vision and objectives.

At this stage of developing the Masterplan we are keen to speak to and hear from a wide range of interested parties on the proposed projects and to discuss whether there are other projects that should be included.

The projects within the Masterplan are intended to prioritise the long term viability of the City Centre while making significant moves towards reducing its carbon footprint and to promote the City Centre as a healthy, green place. There are very few City Centres which enjoy such a rich heritage and a resource like Cooper Park in such close proximity to the High Street.

The final version of the Masterplan will be supported by a Phasing and Delivery Programme which will identify the important “who, what, how much and when” approach to delivering the projects. Securing funding to deliver projects has become more challenging and will require a partnership approach to source funding for some of the projects outlined in the Masterplan. Some of the key projects are linked to the Moray Growth Deal which will provide early and much needed investment into the City Centre.

**The aspiration is to
create a City Centre
that’s distinctive, safe,
vibrant, green and
colourful – a great place
to live, work, do
business and enjoy – a
real Heart to our
growing city.**

How to respond to the draft Masterplan

The partnership wishes to hear from as many people and groups as possible during the consultation.

Covid-19 means that the consultation will be carried out virtually. This will consist of;

- Press and social media posts raising awareness of the consultation, events and how to respond.
- Interactive story-mapping, allowing people to explore and comment on projects online.
- Virtual meetings with Elgin Community Council and Elgin BID to feed-back on comments received.
- A number of virtual events open to the public, details of these to be confirmed.
- A number of virtual 1-2-1 meetings with key stakeholders (such as statutory consultees, interest groups such as Elgin Town Hall for the Community, Friends of Grant Lodge, Grant Lodge Trust, Parentable) and members of the public who are unable to attend other virtual events.
- Youth engagement



We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the Masterplan with you at one of these events or alternatively you can submit comments through our website at **www.moray.gov.uk/ECCMP** or by sending to:

Moray Council,
Strategic Planning & Development,
Council Headquarters,
High Street, Elgin,
IV30 1BX.

**Responses should be submitted, preferably online,
before 5pm on 14th June 2021.**

All responses will be analysed, summarised and reported back to a meeting of the Council's Planning and Regulatory Services Committee. Changes will be made to reflect consultation responses and a final version along with a Delivery Plan will be published for a further round of consultation in late 2021.

Developing the Masterplan

In the early stages of preparing the Masterplan, Moray Council declared a Climate Change emergency. To explore how the City Centre Masterplan projects could contribute towards climate change mitigation, partners took part in a pilot project working with Architecture and Design Scotland (ADS) to explore options for the City Centre to be carbon conscious.

Two workshops were facilitated by ADS and the some of the key themes emerging are summarised below;

- Active travel- fundamental physical changes coupled with behavioural changes and mindset changes
- Reuse- make use of vacant properties
- Flooding- tackle flooding through blue/ green infrastructure
- Embrace and improve green space and ecological value of the town
- Invest in decarbonisation of infrastructure and buildings
- Include all residents in creating the plan for their towns future
- Regenerate and reinvigorate architectural heritage
- Embrace and promote local production
- Invest in Elgin's youth and prospects
- Invert the transport hierarchy
- City Centre living, active re-purposing
- Better connected, active and green
- Loyalty, spend locally

A business breakfast was held on 24th February 2020 with a number of City Centre businesses present. The main feedback from the session was;

- Need to reuse vacant and derelict properties
- Need more information on Moray Growth Deal projects
- Support increased living in the City Centre
- Car parking strategy needs addressed, too expensive, some are empty, compete with free parking at Edgar Road
- St Giles Centre is not performing as a shopping centre, needs redeveloped
- Provide electric bus service from edge of centre car parks to High Street
- Outdoor performance space outside St. Giles
- Capital spend needs revenue support
- Building warrant issues need to be overcome to promote re-use of upper floors
- Careful with modern art
- Strong support for behaviour change.



The overall Vision for the Masterplan is

“To transform Elgin City Centre into a successful, well-connected, healthy, green, attractive, inclusive and carbon conscious centre offering a variety of attractions where people of all ages and abilities shop, live, relax and do business.”

Vision and Objectives

The Vision is supported by a series of objectives set out below. The range of projects and proposals set out in the Masterplan support these cross cutting objectives.

-  To plan for Elgin City Centre’s growth as a vibrant retail and commercial centre, serving Moray and beyond, promoting creative industries

-  To promote Elgin City Centre as a Carbon Conscious place to live, work and visit, prioritising carbon reduction, active travel, re-use of empty/ vacant buildings, surface water management and biodiversity

-  To make Elgin City Centre a green and healthy place which is easy and safe to move around

-  To respect , embrace and market Elgin’s amazing heritage through lighting, interpretation and public art

-  To make Elgin an inclusive place to live, work and play

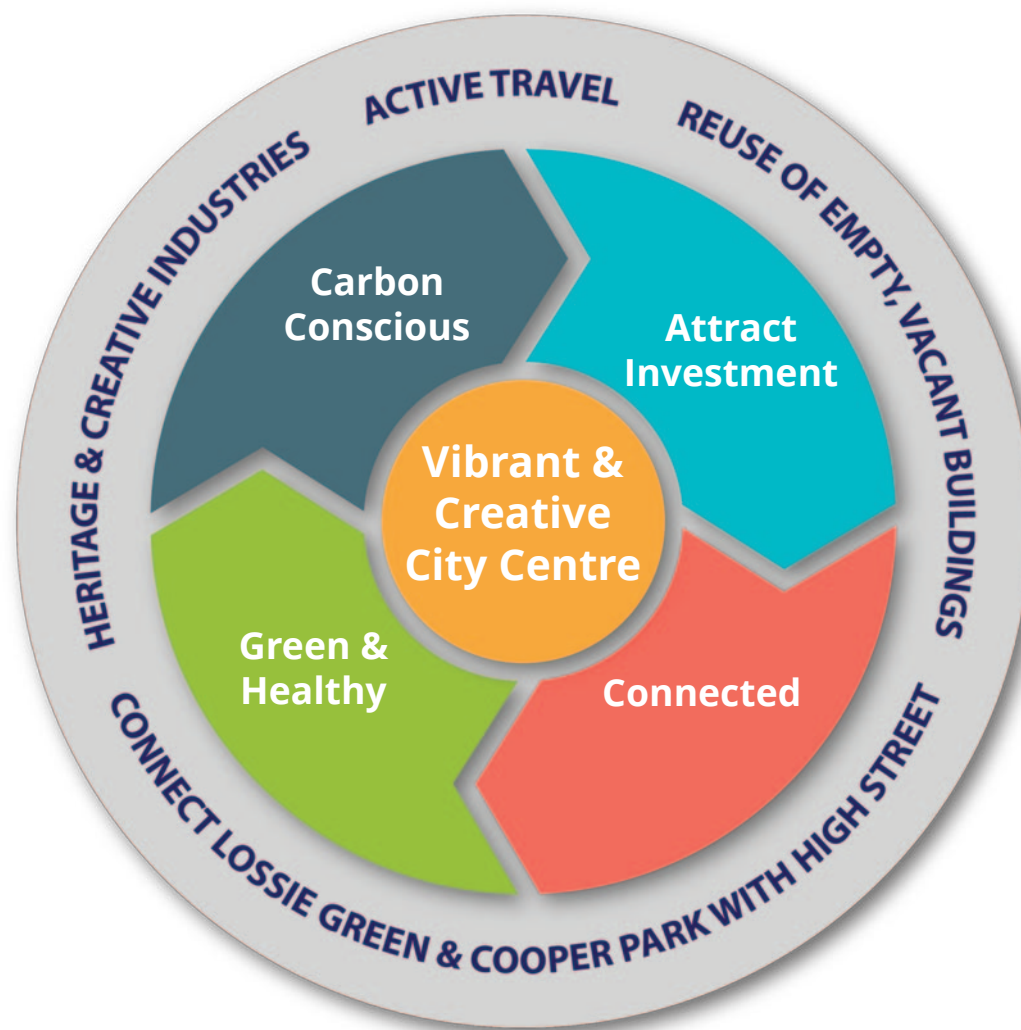
-  To promote creative industries in the City Centre and support an evening economy

-  To increase opportunities for living in the City Centre

-  To provide learning, social and recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities

The projects identified in this Masterplan have been assessed against the objectives and along with feedback from workshops was used to identify the proposed priorities which are summarised in the diagram below, with the key central aim of creating a vibrant city centre with the key actions;

- Attracting investment
- Being carbon conscious
- Promoting a green and healthy city centre
- Connecting the High Street with adjacent areas, including Cooper Park and Elgin Town Hall



The key projects identified as supporting these priorities are summarised in the table below;

Active Travel	Reuse of empty and vacant buildings	Connecting Lossie Green/ Cooper Park/ High Street
CR1 Active Travel Connections	CR2 Vacant/ derelict sites	CR1 Active Travel Connections
CR4 Sustainable Travel Interchange	CR3 Former Victorian Market	CR6 A96 Frontage
CR6 A96 Frontage	CR5 Properties above M&Co	CR13 Public Realm Strategy
CR11 Moss Street	CR8 Poundland	CQ1 Creative Arts Centre
CR13 Public Realm Strategy	CR10 Northport	
CP1 Gateways	CQ2 Grant Lodge	CP1 Gateways
CP3 Play and Recreation		



Moray Growth Deal- what does it mean for Elgin City Centre?

The Moray Growth Deal is a regional deal designed to boost economic growth across Moray. It is a long-term plan centred around specific projects designed to transform the economy, address concerns around encouraging young people to live and work in the area and address gender inequality in employment. The Moray Growth Deal brings together Scottish and UK governments, Moray Council, partners from across the public and third sectors and private businesses.

The Growth Deal consists of 8 projects, details can be seen at www.mymoray.co.uk

A number of the projects will benefit Elgin City Centre, including;



The Business Enterprise Hub, which will be centrally located in Elgin, focussing on education, research and co-location of business support functions in Moray to support new business start-ups, and the upscaling of existing micro businesses to develop Moray's rural economy.



The Cultural Quarter in Elgin, which will include the refurbishment and extension of Grant Lodge into a major visitor attraction, refurbishment and extension of Elgin Town Hall to be a regional arts and entertainment centre and a privately funded hotel. This project aims to increase the cultural offering in Moray helping to attract and retain young talent.



The Housing Mix Delivery project, which includes investment in vacant, derelict and unused properties to convert them for residential use and increase the number of people living in the City Centre.



The Digital Health project which will include a demonstration and simulation environment and Living Lab testbeds for the Moray region, based at Moray College, UHI.

As these projects develop, more details will be provided in the final Masterplan.

Status of Masterplan

Once the final Masterplan has been approved it will be a material consideration in determining future planning applications. The draft Masterplan will also be a material consideration, but will be given less weight until it has been subject to public consultation and final approval.

Extent of Masterplan

The Masterplan boundary extends beyond the boundary identified in the Moray Local Development Plan 2020, including the Core retail area, Lossie Green and Cooper Park, but also south beyond the railway line to include the vacant land at the old Auction Mart and Fleming sawmill.

The Masterplan also refers to and includes projects some distance away such as entrances into the City which can play a key role in directing people to the attractions in the City Centre which will become even more important when the A96 is dualled to market the Centre to visitors.

Leadership

To deliver the aspirations set out in the Masterplan strong leadership is required and different ways of working. It is proposed that the Partnership meet regularly throughout the delivery period to discuss and monitor progress and consider issues arising. The Partnership should also be a co-ordinator for all activities and proposals within the City Centre, both public and private to ensure the Masterplan objectives are not diluted.

The following sections summarises how the various proposals within the Masterplan will address the objectives set out above.



To plan for Elgin City Centre's growth as a vibrant retail and commercial centre, serving Moray and beyond.

Elgin's "vitality" is measured through bi-annual Health Checks on the number of vacant properties and pedestrian movement counts. Although these are fairly crude measures, they do show that Elgin City Centre was performing fairly well, with the number of vacant retail units dropping between 2016 and 2018. However, the Covid 19 Pandemic has had a significant impact upon City Centre businesses and an interim survey has identified an increase in vacant premises.

City and Town Centres will continue to be under threat from changing shopping patterns such as online shopping and out of town retail centres. The Covid 19 Pandemic forced shopping and working habits to change and these are likely to have a long term effect on retail centres, although the magnitude of effect is difficult to predict at this point in time.

Elgin City Centre has experienced significant change with fewer national multiple retailers present and more independent stores being present. This adds to the diversity of shops operating within the City Centre offering something different in terms of shopping experience and reduces leakage of expenditure to Inverness and Aberdeen.

There are fantastic opportunities available in Elgin City Centre to increase the number of people visiting the High Street, and to promote the assets of Cooper Park, Elgin Cathedral and the City's amazing history. Making the City Centre a sustainable viable place is the primary objective and all other objectives need to support this.

The projects in the Masterplan aim to increase the number of people visiting the City Centre which will increase economic activity. A number of key development opportunities have been identified including the former Jailhouse site, empty properties above shops, Grant Lodge and Elgin Town Hall.

Redevelopment opportunities will be supplemented by a programme of public realm projects to direct and encourage people to the City Centre and direct them around the Centre through public art and other streetscape techniques.

This will be key to maximise benefits from key projects such as the proposed visitor centre at Grant Lodge, which is projected to attract 50,000 visitors per annum.

The Masterplan projects also aim to support the development of an evening economy in Elgin, rather than the current perception of the Centre "closing" at 5pm.



To promote Elgin City Centre as a Carbon Conscious place to live, work and visit, prioritising carbon reduction, active travel, re-use of empty/ vacant buildings, surface water management and biodiversity.

One of the key aspirations of the Masterplan is to encourage active travel to and around Elgin City Centre. Wider behavioural change is influenced by many factors outwith the scope of the masterplan, including availability and cost of public transport and parking. The Masterplan aims to put the physical infrastructure in place to encourage active travel and recognise the associated carbon reduction and health benefits of this move. Some of the changes proposed are significant and will be challenging but are required to address the long running severance issues between the City Centre and Cooper Park/Lossie Green and the City Centre and Edgar Road.

Currently the active travel network is limited in terms of connecting into the City Centre and the road network and railway line acts as a barrier to active travel. The A96 Alexandra Road is a Trunk Road and the responsibility of Transport Scotland. When the A96 is dualled the current A96 running through Elgin will become the responsibility of Moray Council. This will offer scope for changes to provision of pedestrian and cycle crossings. A number of key crossings will be reviewed with the aim of

inverting the Transportation hierarchy, placing pedestrian and cycle movements before the car. Improving the provision and priority of pedestrian/ cycle crossings will enhance the connectivity to and within the Masterplan area.

A programme of greening the City Centre is proposed, with more trees and shrubs planted and more food growing opportunities. Green walling is proposed on blank building facades as these can absorb carbon and contribute aesthetically to a green City Centre.

Cooper Park will be promoted as a Carbon Conscious Park, offering a wide range of recreational and biodiversity opportunities.

The Masterplan promotes re-use of empty property and redevelopment of brownfield sites. All key development sites identified in the Masterplan must accord with the highest standards of sustainable design and construction, incorporating renewable energy where technically possible, providing for electric vehicle and bike charging points, cycle parking and storage. Other opportunities for renewable energy will be investigated as the Masterplan progresses.

The programme of greening the City Centre will help absorb rainwater as well as having health and aesthetic benefits. Surface water flooding could be managed through the introduction of rain gardens in key locations such as the former sawmill site and next to the Community Centre. These will offer opportunities to absorb and store water and reduce the risk and impacts of flooding.



To make Elgin City Centre a green and healthy place which is easy and safe to move around, promoting biodiversity and connecting people with nature.

The Masterplan sets out a range of projects aiming to green the City Centre, such as green walling on blank facades of the St Giles car park and Thunderton Place car park, planting for biodiversity at Northport and Copper Park, more planting throughout the City streets and better connections to a revitalised Cooper Park, which will offer a range of healthy pursuits.

Significant active travel connections into the City Centre will encourage more walking and cycling, which will be complemented by an expanded range of leisure pursuits for all abilities in Cooper Park including a new play park, new activities such as a Boulder Park and a new Sports Pavilion. Cooper Park pond will be improved and brought back into use.

A wetland area adjacent to the River Lossie will be opened up with boardwalks and interpretation, providing a wetland biodiversity learning resource and connecting people with nature.

To respect, embrace and market Elgin's amazing heritage through lighting, interpretation and public art

Elgin's amazing heritage is reflected in many of the buildings and streets within and around the City Centre. It is proposed to continue on from the Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere project and create further heritage trails, introduce more interpretation in the city centre telling the history of Elgin and using the paving, art and lighting to direct people between the High Street, Cooper Park and Lossie Green.

Key listed buildings will be brought back into use such as Grant Lodge and the old Victorian market. Other listed buildings such as the Town Hall will be refurbished and extended.

Elgin City Centre is full of interesting lanes connecting streets. The lanes will be enhanced, using art, lighting, waymarking and planting to direct and encourage people to explore the lanes.

Lighting will be used to highlight key buildings and attractions such as Elgin Cathedral and key architectural features on buildings, which will link with additional interpretation.

A public art strategy will be developed to direct people to and between key attractions. This will include roundabouts on the A96 and other key gateways into the city and will be focussed on the interpretation principles of "provoke, relate, reveal."



To make Elgin an inclusive place to live, work and play

The Partnership will continue to work with representatives of Parentable and Moray Disability Forum on the draft and finalised Masterplan to discuss and identify accessibility issues which need to be addressed. The aim is to make the City Centre as easy to move around as possible. Some key improvements identified in the draft Masterplan include;

- Considering removal of the bridge between Northport and Cooper Park and replacing it with a surface level crossing and associated traffic calming
- Reviewing the position of existing crossings and the possibility of new/ relocated crossings for future provision.
- Introducing inclusive play equipment in the Cooper Park play area
- Investigating inclusive boats for use in Cooper Park pond
- Introducing points of interest throughout Cooper Park for people of all abilities
- Improving path surfaces in Cooper Park
- Proposing all ability toilet provision in Cooper Park and City Centre car parks
- Investigating new active travel connection from New Elgin over the railway line

To promote creative industries in the City Centre and support an evening economy

The masterplan promotes and supports the Moray Growth Deal Cultural Quarter project which consists of;

- A refurbished and extended Town Hall, providing a top class entertainment venue for a range of events as well as opportunities for learning associated with creative arts courses. The extended building could include a small cinema for niche films, recording rooms, studio spaces, lecture rooms, meeting spaces, café and a FABLAB facility offering high technology learning opportunities for all ages.
- A refurbished and extended Grant Lodge, becoming a key tourist attraction as a food and drink visitor experience which showcases and signposts visitors to the fantastic range of attractions which Moray has to offer. Visitors will also be encouraged to spend time in Cooper Park and the High Street through marketing, signage, art and improved pedestrian connectivity. Grant Lodge could also include creative industries workshop space on the upper floor.

- A centrally located high quality hotel. A number of sites are being explored for this, which is intended to complement the Cultural Quarter project and meet demand for higher quality bed spaces close to the City Centre. One option being explored is at Lossie Green car park.

In addition to the above, the Masterplan proposes a public art strategy to build upon the work undertaken through the artist in residence programme supported by Elgin BID. This will help to tell the story of Elgin and showcase the arts in a variety of mediums. It is also proposed to create an outdoor performance space in Cooper Park, close to Grant Lodge and enjoying views of Elgin Cathedral.



To increase opportunities for living in the City Centre

Increasing the number of people living in the City Centre will increase the vibrancy and support the changing nature of the Centre. There are a number of key opportunities for new housing in the City Centre using empty and derelict properties, which could be brought back into use.

In addition to private sector investment, there are funding opportunities through the Moray Growth Deal Housing Mix project and potentially through future Town Centre Regeneration funding to support this objective.

and recreational opportunities for young people

A key aspiration of the Moray Growth Deal is to increase the number of 16-29 year olds within Moray. Long term population projections show Moray with significantly more older people and significantly fewer young people. The Masterplan aims to support the Growth Deal aspiration by providing learning, training and employment opportunities for young people and venues for entertainment and socialising.

In terms of education opportunities, the projects support the central location of a Business Hub which will support business study students in a real business environment and expansion of creative industry courses.

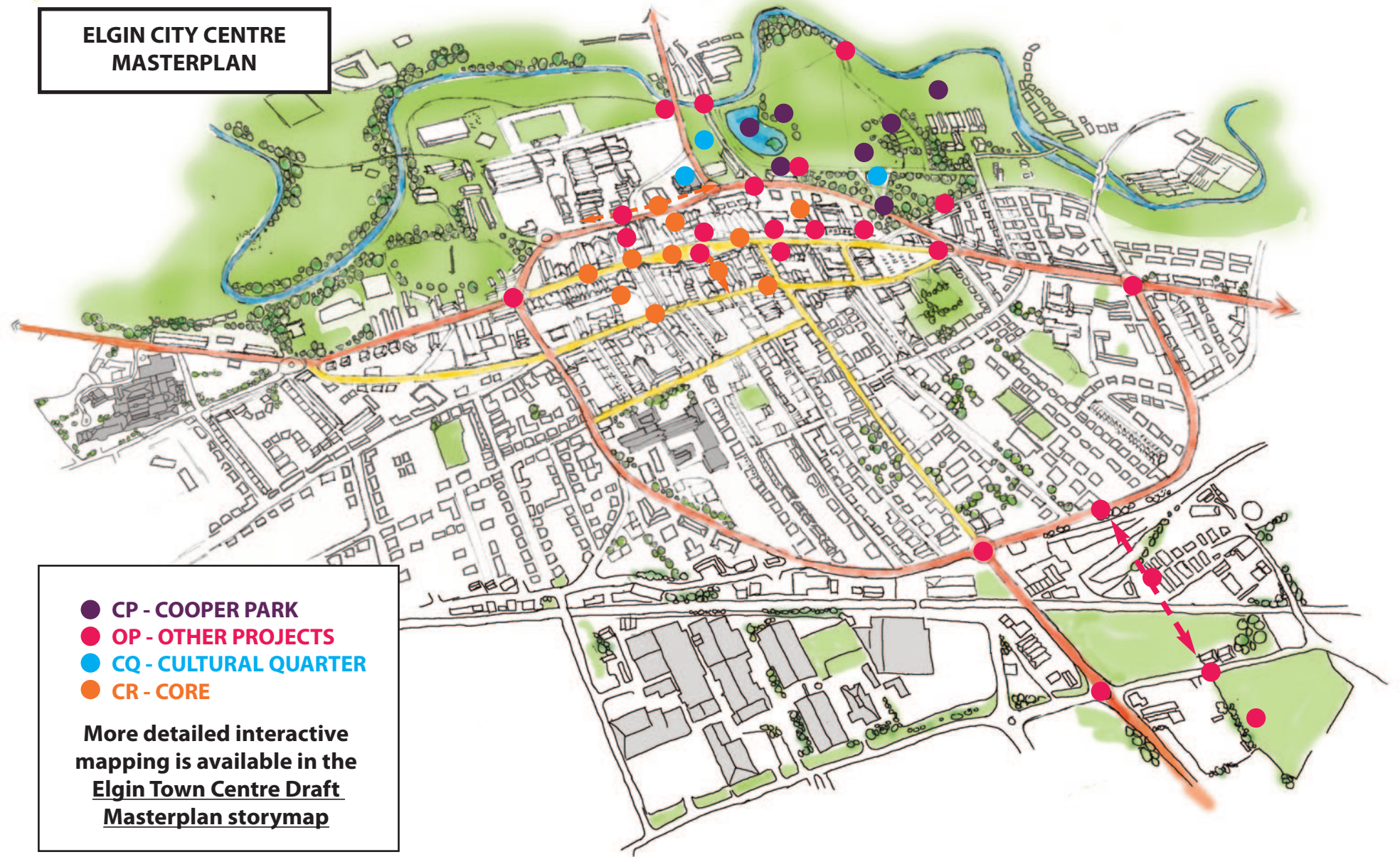
Employment opportunities will be created through the projects in this Masterplan with opportunities likely to be available at Grant Lodge, a centrally located hotel, a new Business Hub and at Elgin Town Hall.



The Masterplan

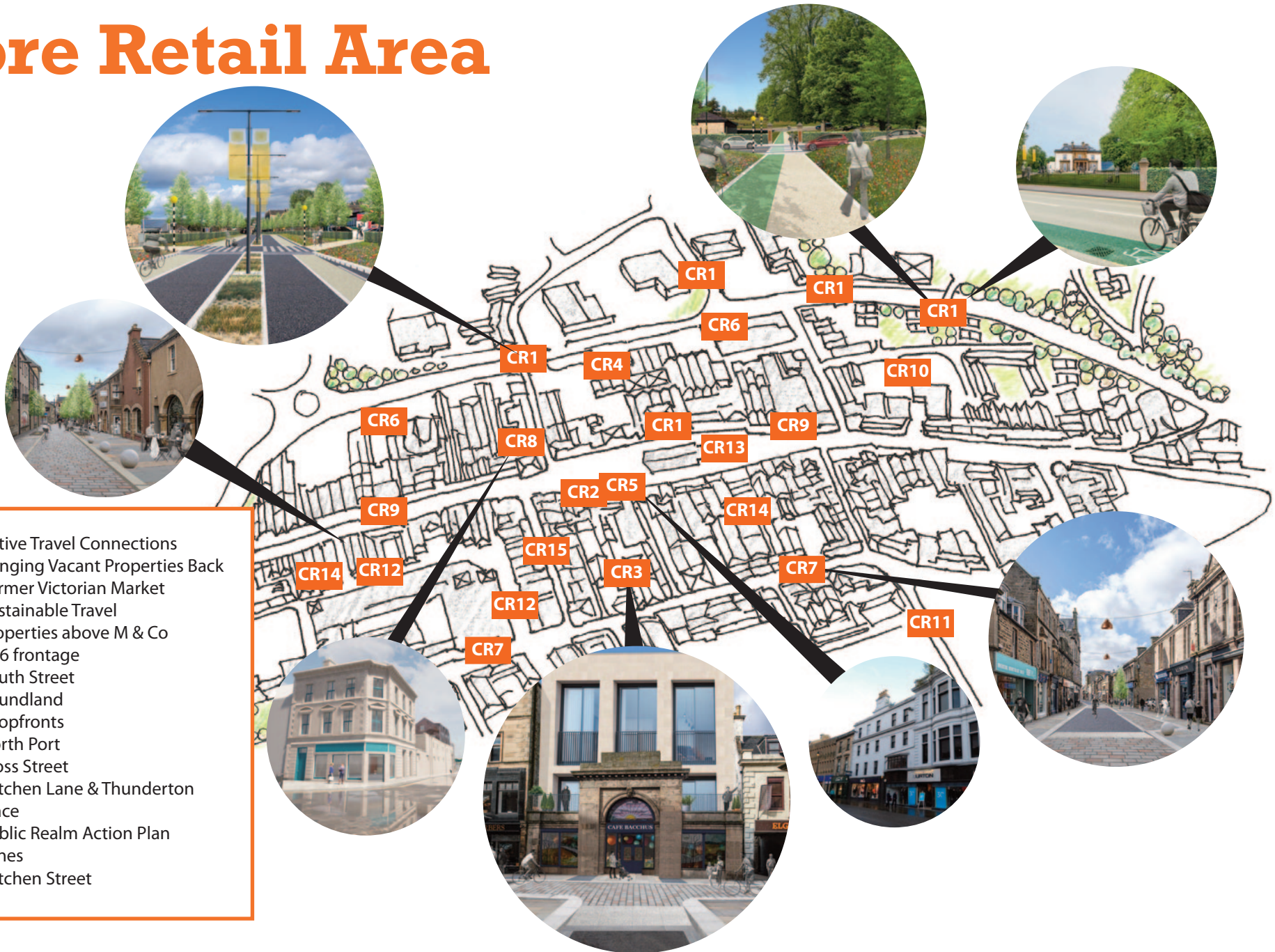
The Masterplan vision, objectives and priorities will be delivered through a range of projects and views are sought on these projects and their priority, which will be reflected in the final Masterplan. These will be reviewed annually to monitor progress, with additional projects added as required. Projects have been split geographically into 4 sections, but many are cross cutting both in terms of geography and in terms of the objectives and priorities which they support.

ELGIN CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN



Core Retail Area

- CR1** Active Travel Connections
- CR2** Bringing Vacant Properties Back
- CR3** Former Victorian Market
- CR4** Sustainable Travel
- CR5** Properties above M & Co
- CR6** A96 frontage
- CR7** South Street
- CR8** Poundland
- CR9** Shopfronts
- CR10** North Port
- CR11** Moss Street
- CR12** Batchen Lane & Thunderton Place
- CR13** Public Realm Action Plan
- CR14** Lanes
- CR15** Batchen Street



Core Retail Area

Introduction

The Masterplan aims to transform the core retail area into a vibrant place that supports economic activity and encourages people to live, work and use the City Centre both during the day and evening. The Masterplan identifies a number of projects to deliver this aim.

The refurbishment of empty properties and redevelopment of vacant sites for both business and residential uses has a significant role to play in attracting businesses and encouraging people to live in the City Centre. This helps to support both a day and evening economy, improves the attractiveness of the Centre and maintains Elgin's fantastic built heritage.

The majority of properties 'turn their back' to the A96 through Elgin. The de-trunking of the road provides opportunities for surface level crossings that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles helping to 're-connect' the Core Retail area to Cooper Park and the Cultural Quarter, and planting that both 'greens' and softens the street and helps naturally drain surface water.

Blank rear facades of properties such as the St Giles Shopping Centre provide opportunities to introduce murals that celebrate Elgin's history and/or 'green walls' that act as carbon sinks, whilst vacant sites have the potential to create frontages onto the road which overall make a more welcoming entrance into the City Centre and Elgin as a whole.

The success of Batchen Street is evident with the growth of independent retailers and niche markets within the City Centre. Improvements to the appearance of Batchen Street have played an important role in attracting businesses (and customers). The Masterplan proposes to build on this by improving the attractiveness of neighbouring streets such as South Street and Thunderton Place through paving, planting, lighting, shop front improvements and pedestrian prioritisation to support the establishment and/or expansion of independent retailers in the Core Retail area.

The Masterplan proposes a consistent, fresh approach to signage, street furniture, public art, lighting and planting to the Core Retail area as a whole to improve the general appearance and attractiveness of the City Centre. As part of this transformation, a new Heritage Trail is proposed to guide people through art and lighting to local landmarks.





CR1 Active Travel Connections - Removing barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement

Proposal

- **New active travel connections between core retail area and Cooper Park, Town Hall, Grant Lodge and Elgin South by 2032.**

This project seeks to provide the infrastructure and environment to support the aim of making walking and cycling the preferred choice for people making short journeys around Elgin, in particular to and around the City Centre, in keeping with the new National Transport Strategy (NTS2). NTS2 seeks to invert the travel hierarchy by prioritising walking and wheeling first, then cycling, and public transport above private cars.

In 2016 barriers to movement by foot and cycle within and on the routes leading to Elgin City Centre were identified as part of the consultation for the Elgin Transport Strategy. This project seeks to build on those findings, incorporating specific barriers to movement identified by the Parentable group, to provide safe, convenient and attractive routes for walkers, wheelers and cyclists.

Key locations where improvement would be required which have been identified to date include:

- Cumming Street between Lossie Green car park and the Town Hall
- Cumming Street between Halfords and Elgin Town Hall
- On the corner of Lossie Wynd and the High Street
- Near the junction of Moss Street with Station Road
- Near the junction of Duff Avenue and Maisondieu Road
- Alexandra Road between Grant Lodge and the Elgin Museum
- Alexandra Road between North Port and Elgin Library
- Between North Street and Trinity Place

Other more significant active travel infrastructure projects aim to increase the walkability of Elgin city centre which would improve personal health and well-being. Improvements to Moss Street, Thunderton Place and South Street to reduce the dominance of vehicle movements along these routes and make them more attractive environments for pedestrians and cyclists are proposed. Changes to surfacing materials and the addition of street furniture would be key considerations for these projects, along with high quality lighting to ensure that pedestrians feel safe and comfortable at all times of the day and night.

The active travel network to the south of the City Centre has been developed over recent years with a number of new shared use cycle paths and footway re-determination to cycle ways. However the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line, with its limited opportunities for crossing, remains a barrier for pedestrians and cyclists. A new active travel connection over the railway will be investigated to provide a safe and convenient route from south Elgin to the city centre and to connect to overspill parking and a sustainable travel hub.

In 2021/22 the Scottish Government is due to publish updated guidance on the design of infrastructure for cycling 'Cycling by Design' in relation to accessibility requirements (current guidance Roads for All). The consideration and design of specific infrastructure projects will take cognisance of this updated guidance and follow current best practice.



CR2 Bringing Vacant/ Derelicts Sites and Properties Into Reuse

Proposals:

- To reduce the number of empty properties and vacant/derelict sites in the city centre including redevelopment of Grant Lodge and the Jailhouse site by 2026
- To increase the number of residential properties in Elgin City Centre by 50 by 2030
- To aim for all major city centre redevelopment opportunities to be carbon neutral

This project aims to bring vacant properties back into use and redevelop redundant buildings and sites for both residential and commercial uses. Refurbishing/redeveloping vacant properties creates a more attractive, active City which supports and attracts businesses in and also helps to provide more choice for people in where they wish to live, creates more activity in the street, and encourages walking and cycling and reduces reliance on the car.

All redevelopment proposals should aim to be carbon neutral incorporating the highest standards of sustainable design and construction and using renewable energy sources wherever technically feasible.





CR3 Former Victorian Market between High Street and South Street (Junnners/Jailhouse)

Proposal

- To work with landowners and Elgin BID to implement a comprehensive mixed use redevelopment of properties in the vicinity of the former Victorian Market by 2026, consisting of retail, residential and commercial uses.

This project will only be feasible with the agreement of existing owners and acceptable relocation of any existing businesses.

The former Jailhouse nightclub site has been vacant since a fire burned it down about 20 years ago and is one of Moray's most challenging derelict sites, hidden from view behind an archway on the High Street. Historic maps show that the site once contained a Victorian Market with access taken from South Street and a ballroom above.

Redevelopment proposals must be of the highest design standards, respecting the Conservation Area status of the sites and retain the listed features on site. Proposals must provide a link between South Street and the High Street and a courtyard opportunity for food and drink. Proposals must also be carbon neutral. The site is suitable for a mix of commercial, retail and residential uses.

While on site parking provision would be very challenging, there may be an opportunity for limited car share club parking spaces and dedicated parking spaces. The focus on site will be on cycle parking and storage facilities.





CR4 Sustainable Travel Interchange and Infrastructure

Proposals

- **Develop a Sustainable Travel Interchange based at Elgin bus station by 2026**
- **Provide electric vehicle charging points in City Centre car parks by 2030**

This project aims to support the use of public transport, shared transport and electric vehicles for longer journeys to the city centre and for people who are unable to walk or cycle, through the provision of a sustainable travel interchange facility and electric vehicle charging infrastructure within the city centre.

The existing Elgin bus station is located to the rear of the St Giles Shopping Centre, adjacent to the A96 (T) Alexandra Road and North Street. The bus station has a covered canopy area for waiting passengers, an enclosed waiting room open 0900 to 1930 and stances for seven buses. The bus station provides both access to the city centre via local bus services and the opportunity to board longer distance services to Inverness and Aberdeen.

The primary aim of the project is a re-thinking of the existing bus station to develop a sustainable travel interchange. The interchange would be well lit and welcoming, providing users with a safe and comfortable waiting area.

Travellers would readily change from public transport to walking and cycling and would be secure, with high quality cycle parking facilities provided and provision for the hire of/ charging of e-bikes. Key to the experience at the interchange would be the provision of information on public transport services and cycle and pedestrian routes to key destinations in the city centre, provided in a clear accessible way.

The aspiration also exists to create an accessible passenger waiting facility which will offer a comfortable transport transition option between transport modes.

The redesign of the bus access arrangements, and manoeuvring area, would need to take into consideration the traffic levels on A96 Alexandra Road along with any changes to junction layouts e.g. the introduction of traffic signal controlled junctions.

The route from the interchange to Plainstones needs to be legible and attractive and improvements to Lossie Wynd would be required as this could become a key pedestrian route into the core retail area.

Whilst walking, cycling and public transport will be viable travel choices for many city centre visitors, the rural nature of Moray will result in some trips being made by private vehicles. The Scottish Government has pledged to phase out new petrol and diesel cars and vans across Scotland by 2032. Publically accessible electric vehicle charging facilities recently have been installed within some Moray Council public car parks within the city centre. However to meet projected demand for charging facilities there will be a network of EV chargers within the city centre for use by both residents and visitors.

The EV charging facilities will be sensitively located to respect the historic areas within the city centre and be located at key destinations and businesses, along with public car parks and on-street. There will also be facilities for storing and charging electric bikes.



CR5 Properties above M&Co.

Proposal

- To redevelop the properties above M & Co for mixed uses by 2030.

These empty properties are on a prime location on the High Street and are full of interesting architectural features reflecting their former use as the Gordon Arms Hotel. In conjunction with the empty homes project this would prove a fantastic opportunity to provide homes in the city centre. There is also the opportunity to explore if the site would be suitable for potential hotel use given its past.



CR6 A96 Frontage

Proposals:

- **By 2030 to redesign blank facades with a mixture of public art, illuminated panels, lighting or living green walls, depending upon locations and structural integrity.**
- **By 2032 remove pedestrian bridge across the A96 and the underpass and replace with surface level pedestrian crossings and planting to provide better connections between the High Street, Cultural Quarter and Cooper Park and encourage walking and cycling.**
- **Redevelop 'gap' sites (i.e. rear of RBS) to present a frontage onto Ladyhill Car Park/A96 by 2030.**

The de-trunking of the A96 provides a major opportunity to re-connect the Core Retail area, Cultural Quarter and Cooper Park together again. This involves changing the nature of the road through paving materials, planting, crossings, etc. to prioritise active travel over the car. This will encourage traffic to move slower and make the A96 a less hostile environment for walking and cycling so that these are more attractive options for travelling to and from the City Centre.

Two main issues need to be addressed: properties that front onto the High Street present their rear (often blank) facades to the A96 (e.g. Joanna's nightclub, Poundland and St Giles Shopping Centre and car park) which along with poor public realm and large areas of car parking are uninviting; and, the A96 currently acts as a major barrier severing the City Centre (retail area) from recreational, community and cultural facilities in the immediate vicinity.

To create a more attractive frontage onto the A96, blank facades need to be addressed through a variety of means: murals/public art, illuminated panels, lighting, and 'living' walls, the latter having the benefits of being attractive whilst significantly reducing carbon and being low maintenance. Together with improvements to the public realm, planting and bringing vacant properties and 'gap' sites back into use through either refurbishment or redevelopment the general appearance of the A96 'area' would be greatly improved creating a more positive perception of the City Centre and Elgin from this busy thoroughfare.

Ladyhill car park is currently a busy area with lanes providing direct routes into and from the City Centre and popular facilities such as the cinema and restaurants. The general appearance of the car park needs to be improved through public realm works and planting to address the existing pedestrian-vehicle conflict to create a safer environment.



CR7 South Street

Proposal:

- By 2030 redesign the street through paving, planting, public art, and street furniture to create a 'pedestrian-friendly environment while retaining access for vehicles.
- Support the growth of Elgin's independent retailers into South Street (and Thunderton Place) from Batchen Street.
- Redevelop redundant buildings/sites for a mix of uses (retail, offices, restaurants/cafes/bars, housing).
- Refurbish shop fronts through a shop front improvement scheme.

South Street has the potential to be significantly more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists as the street is currently dominated by cars and service vehicles with narrow pavements (at certain points), and a number of vacant properties/rundown facades which creates a poor physical environment.

There are a number of key elements that are essential to the transformation of South Street: redesigning the street using hard (i.e. paving) and soft (i.e. trees, shrubs) landscaping, public art and street furniture; shop front/facade improvements; and, bringing vacant properties back into use/redeveloping redundant buildings and sites for a mix of uses (retail, commercial, offices, residential).





CORE RETAIL AREA

CR8 Poundland

Proposal

- **By 2025 complete a mixed use development on this prominent location on High Street and North Street.**

A mixed use development opportunity has been identified at 161 – 163 on the High Street which is currently occupied by Poundland. The site is in a prominent location on the High Street and is located where North Street and the High Street intersect. The main former bank building is category B listed. To the rear of the main building a large 20th century extension has been added. This extension runs down North Street and is visually unattractive with very few windows fronting the street making it an imposing structure. North Street is one of the busiest routes in and out of the city centre given its proximity to the bus station and the underpass. However it is perceived as a negative street due to the imposing nature of the buildings that align it, particularly the 2 storey 20th century extension to the rear of Poundland, and the poor public realm.

A planning application for the site has been approved for a mixed use development. Any future planning applications for the redevelopment of this site must;

- Respect the category B listed former bank building and wider conservation area with a development proposal that respects Elgin's built heritage creating a feature on the High Street and enhancing the town centre as a destination. Contemporary materials and designs can be used to reflect the colours and existing materials found in Elgin's historic centre which will enhance and add to the visual interest of the conservation area.
- Improve the visual appearance of North Street which is a key and busy route into the centre. In particular, improving the appearance of the 20th century extension which is unattractive and imposing on the street. This could be achieved by re-rendering this element of the building to reflect Poundland to create consistency and improve the overall appearance of the conservation area. Altering building lines and breaking down the overall massing of any proposal to make the built form less imposing would also make the street more welcoming for pedestrians.
- Create an attractive space for inward investment (e.g. office/retail) on a key street which is currently being underutilised. Opportunities to create more space for pedestrians and make the street more welcoming and safe particularly at the northern part of North Street must be considered and can be achieved by setting back and altering building lines.
- Provide a residential element to bring people into the city centre which will increase footfall and vitality and promote economic growth;
- Provide an attractive frontage to Alexandra Road (current A96). The building currently "turns away" from Alexandra Road which is unattractive and does not welcome users into the town centre. With the current A96 due to be de-trunked in the future as part of the A96 dualling project, any future redevelopment proposal must be outward looking to address this issue. This can be achieved by providing an outward looking gable ended frontage on the northern elevation through the use of windows or glazing that reflects the historic street layout of the conservation area.



CORE RETAIL AREA

CR9 Shopfronts

Proposal

- To prepare design guide and implement a shopfront improvement scheme by 2025 to improve the visual appearance of Elgin's traditional shopfronts and strengthen and improve the city centre's existing historic character

The project seeks to improve and enhance the quality and design of Elgin's shopfronts to reflect the historic character of the city centre and conservation area. The appearance of shopfronts plays an important role in the character of not only individual buildings but also the wider area and can add to the vitality of the centre.

Improving shopfronts will promote the centre as a destination by enhancing its appeal to visitors, customers, and assist in encouraging further investment by boosting business confidence.

The project would seek to achieve this through the replacement of historical features, renovating shopfronts, making repairs, and improving signage.



CR10 North Port

Proposal

- **By 2030 transform the existing precinct with a range of shopfront improvements and strengthen the connection between the High Street and Cooper Park through high quality public realm, lighting improvements, and landscaping improvements;**
- **By 2032 remove the bridge over the A96 towards Cooper Park which will be replaced with a new active travel crossing.**
- **Discuss the long term future use of the Northport area and work in partnership with existing businesses, landowners and other stakeholders.**

This project provides the opportunity to transform and enhance a tired part of the city centre which experiences relatively low footfall. This has the potential to become a busy thoroughfare upon completion of the Grant Lodge project if significant numbers of visitors can be directed to the core retail area of the city centre.

While several of the units are currently occupied the precinct is dated and visually unattractive. The public realm between the buildings is poor and serves little function in terms of providing a usable space that people would seek to spend time in. The current configuration of the buildings restricts visual connections towards Cooper Park. Enhancing this area to emphasise these key connections would make Elgin city centre a more attractive place and encourage residents and tourists to access other attractions such as Cooper Park and the Cathedral.

In the longer term there may be an opportunity to explore whether Northport could be comprehensively redeveloped, accommodating existing businesses and creating an attractive new space within close proximity to the High Street. This could consist of residential uses on upper floors with retail/commercial units on the ground floor. The careful alignment of building lines would allow visual connections to be established towards Cooper Park where the footbridge could be replaced with a new active travel crossing. Establishing and emphasising this visual connection would encourage users to travel between the High Street and Cooper Park.

High quality public realm improvements and seating areas would increase use of this area, complemented with creative lighting making it a safe route to travel through during evenings and darker months.

As part of the public realm improvements there is the opportunity to introduce planting to create a “linear park”. This would serve the dual purpose of softening the streetscene, creating an attractive space, and further emphasising the connection between the High Street and Cooper Park by encouraging users to enter the space.



CR11 Moss Street

Proposal:

- By 2030 prioritise pedestrians by restricting traffic to the northbound lane and redesign through paving, planting, lighting and waymarking to create a more attractive street.

Moss Street provides a direct link from the south of Elgin to the City Centre. The conversion of Moss Street to a one-way system (northbound) and the widening of footways/cycleways is a project identified in Moray Council's Elgin Transport Strategy (ETS). There are a number of buildings of local historic interest and associated detailing such as stone boundary walls, railings and mature planting which provides an attractive route into the City Centre. The project involves changes to surface materials (e.g. paving), the incorporation of planting, and improved lighting and waymarking will create a more attractive street for pedestrians and cyclists.



CR12 Batchen Lane (Northfield Terrace Car Park to Thunderton Place) and Thunderton Place

Proposals:

- **By 2030 create an attractive lane from Northfield Terrace to Thunderton Place and South Street/High Street through upgrading paving, lighting, street furniture and planting.**
- **Screen the rear elevations/service areas of properties fronting onto High Street through attractive walling and planting.**
- **Redesign blank façade of TK Maxx with a public art mural, illuminated panels and lighting, or a green 'living' wall.**
- **Promote a café culture along Thunderton Place through the provision of outdoor seating areas.**

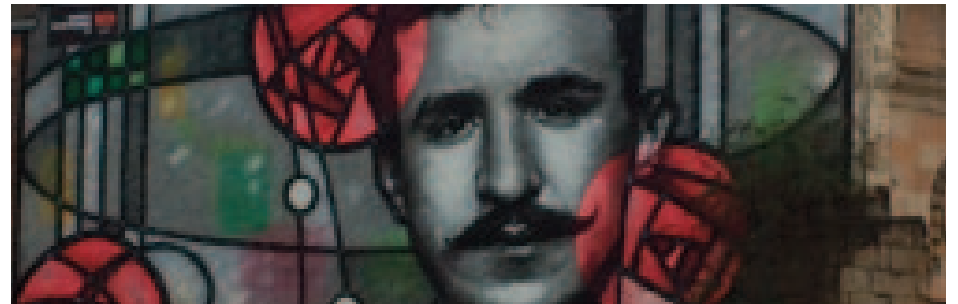
Thunderton Place

This project consists of two parts: improving the general appearance of Thunderton Place to support a café culture and build on the success of independent businesses in Batchen Street; and, creating an attractive lane between Northfield Terrace and Thunderton Place. (Batchen) Lane and Thunderton Place are important entrances into the City Centre as they both have car parks (Northfield Terrace car park to the east and Batchen Lane car park to the south) and often form people's initial perception of the Centre.

Thunderton Place has a number of successful businesses including a public house, restaurant and café. The B-listed Thunderton House is currently being converted into flats and is an attractive building in the heart of the City Centre. However, the physical appearance of the street appears quite harsh with large areas of paving and little planting or outdoor seating. The upgrading of paving and use of planting, public art and lighting, together with the provision of seating will help transform the physical appearance of Thunderton Place to create a more attractive street in which to spend time and encourage the emerging café culture/independent businesses in this part of town. Similarly upgrading the pedestrian connection between Batchen Street and Thunderton Place would complement and replicate the existing works at Batchen Street and those being proposed at Thunderton Place.

Batchen Lane is an important connection that links Northfield Terrace to Thunderton Place. A more attractive and inviting lane is proposed using new paving, planting and street furniture that prioritises pedestrians and clearly defines parking areas to the rear of properties. This can build on the success of the physical improvements and public art (which illustrates the businesses' and Elgin's heritage) made to another part of Batchen Lane.

The rear of properties and service areas for commercial premises fronting onto the High Street could be enhanced through new walls/features and planting. The blank façade of TK Maxx needs to be redesigned with a public art mural, illuminated panels and/or a green 'living' wall. Lighting needs to be enhanced to create a more attractive and safer environment.





CR13 Public Realm Action Plan

Project Outcomes

- Prepare a comprehensive Public Realm Action Plan by 2022, which will cover street materials and furniture, public art, hard and soft landscaping, lighting and signage.
- Develop an overall design concept, vision and brand for the city centre and the various projects in conjunction with the Public Realm Action Plan by 2022.
- Develop a Visit Elgin app. by 2023
- Develop a heritage trail by 2023

The aim of this project is to improve the attractiveness and vitality of the city centre by taking a comprehensive approach to improving the public realm, which is defined for this purpose as the pedestrian areas, street furniture (such as benches and bins), signage, public art and lighting. The public realm is a key component of any retail centre and links all the key components of the city centre together, creating an attractive space for people to enjoy and be directed around.

The project seeks to build on Elgin's built heritage and layout and guide people to key attractions and shopping areas such as the Cathedral, Grant Lodge, Ladyhill, Cooper Park, the High Street, Batchen Street, Thunderton Place, South Street and to explore the myriad of connecting lanes and other places of interest. The project will help to attract people to the city centre, helping to reinforce a sense of character and identity.

The current problems in the public realm include;

- Lack of an overall public art strategy
- No lighting of key attractions
- Mixture and confusion of signage, with much of it out of date
- Poor quality street materials and no control over replacement materials
- Conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians/ cyclists
- Limited parking for cyclists



The project consists of a number of key elements;

Public Art Strategy

A public art strategy is required with art taking many forms, from traditional sculpture and murals to events and activities. These should reflect Elgin's amazing history, the key characters which have influenced the city over time, the key buildings and the activities which have moulded the city into what it is today.



The Strategy would be developed by an independent artist commissioned by the Council and would build upon the artist in residence work undertaken by Elgin BID. The strategy would include proposals to incorporate public art into hard landscaping, street furniture such as seating, planters for soft landscaping, and signage, wall art such as panels and murals, lighting to provide pleasant safe environments but also to create intrigue and sensory features. The painting or projection of public art reflecting the history and character of the area onto large, blank facades will improve the streetscape, and help support development of an evening economy in the city centre.

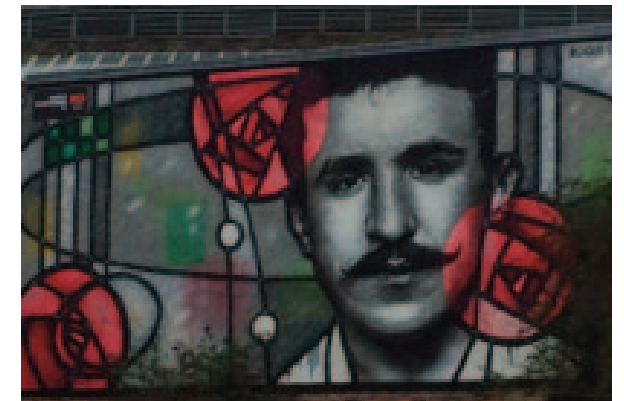
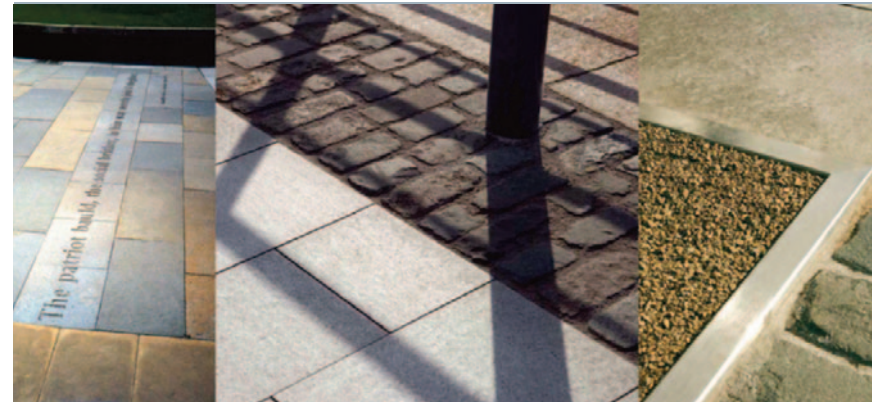
The artist would engage with the public, community groups, young people and other stakeholders to develop a strategy which reflects Elgin's rich heritage in a variety of forms.

The Strategy would build on the success of Moray's Great Places (website).



Streets and materials

Streets have been identified such as Thunderton Place, North Street and Lossie Wynd and South Street where streetscape works are proposed to improve the appearance of the street, slow vehicular traffic and make the streets more attractive and safer for pedestrians and cyclists. The streetscape works will consist of widening pavements, introducing new, higher quality paving materials and setts/ paviors into the street with soft landscaping where appropriate.



Lighting strategy

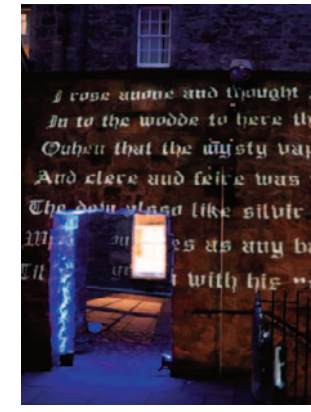
Elgin city centre has a high quality built environment which is reflected by the conservation area status and large number of listed buildings.

Key buildings will be lit to improve the attractiveness of the city centre, enhance the setting of buildings, showcase Elgin's built heritage and support the evening economy. This will include lighting of Elgin Cathedral, Grant Lodge, key buildings in the High Street and through the connecting streets and lanes, including lighting of new public art.

There are also opportunities to introduce creative lighting on blank gables such as those facing Alexandra Road to create visual interest.

Some examples of buildings which could be lit include;

- Elgin Cathedral;
- Grant Lodge;
- St Giles Church and War memorial;
- Thunderton House;
- Braco's banking House;
- Red Lion Inn;
- 50-52 High Street Merchants House;
- 103 – 105 High Street, The Tower;
- Little Cross



Street furniture

The project aims to bring a more uniform style to the street furniture around the city centre and avoid “clutter”. Street furniture will reflect the different character areas within the city centre and may incorporate public art and form part of the way marking around the centre.

Benches will be provided to encourage social interaction as well as points for people to rest and reflect. Recycling points will be introduced into the High Street and Cooper Park.



Way-marking, heritage trail and interpretation

The project will replace the current, dated black fingerpost signage with new interactive information points, complemented with ground level way-marking similar to the breadcrumb trail in Inverness. A central information hub in the area surrounding St Giles Church would provide a focal point for visitors and tourists, in the form of an information screen(s). Public art will also be used as a means of way-marking, linking the various parts of the city centre together and directing visitors from the rail and bus stations and car parks to the towns many attractions.

The existing Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere (CCC) trail interpretation will be reviewed with additional interpretation complementing public art to “provoke, relate and reveal” the story of Elgin and direct visitors to places of interest. This will include a formal heritage trail taking visitors around the city centre using a range of way-marking and interpretive techniques and supported by a “Visit Elgin” app.



CR14 Lanes

Proposal:

- **By 2030 implement improvements on a 'priority' basis to the City Centre lanes with Harrow Inn Close and City Arms Close first, creating attractive lanes through new paving, planting, public art and signage.**

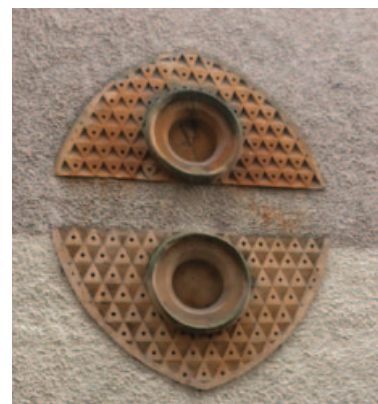
This project seeks to improve lanes and encourage people to use them more frequently as they provide direct routes into the City Centre and are an important part of Elgin's history. Lanes such as Harrow Inn Close and City Arms Close are well-used and accommodate a number of businesses, shops and the cinema. Other lanes (such as Branders Close) accommodate mostly flats and houses. Some lanes such as Forsyths Close, Charles Close, Victoria Close, White Horse Close and Batchen Lane are attractive places with sensitively refurbished properties, paving and planting. These are good examples of bringing the lanes (and properties) back into use.

However, the majority of lanes are generally in need of improvement, which can be achieved by upgrading paving materials, and introducing planting, public art and better lighting. All lanes in the City Centre need name plates as currently a number of lanes do not have these. There are a number of historic plaques/features throughout the lanes and their importance to Elgin's history needs to be highlighted and built upon through the heritage trail.

The improvements to lanes will be carried out on a 'priority' basis. The proposed prioritisation of lanes (shown below) has been based on current usage, destination (i.e. where the lane takes you to) and physical appearance. Not all lanes are included (i.e. smaller 'private' lanes or those that do not require any further improvement such as Forsyths Close and Charles Close). The priorities are:

- **Priority one:** Harrow Inn Close, City Arms Close.
- **Priority two:** Fife Arms Close, Hays Close, Red Lion Close, Shepherd's Close, Branders Close.
- **Priority three:** White Horse Close (paving only), Victoria Close (paving only), Kilmolymock Close (paving only), Masonic Close (paving only).





CR15 Batchen Street

Proposal

- Access control to enforce Traffic Regulation Order and support café culture by 2023
- Introduce seating, art, lighting and potentially canopies

This proposal aims to control vehicular access to Batchen Street, with service vehicles permitted access at specified times. This project relies upon North Street being re-opened to vehicular traffic once the Poundland site redevelopment has been completed.

The closure of Batchen Street to vehicular traffic for a few hours during the day as part of the Spaces for People measures demonstrated the popularity of Batchen Street for cafes and bars, with a number of premises having outdoor seating. Controlling vehicular access to Batchen Street would support this developing culture, helping attract and keep people in the City Centre for longer and support an evening economy.

Street works could include the introduction of seating, planters and public art, with the potential for canopies to be introduced to provide shelter during bad weather.



Cultural Quarter



- CQ1** Town Hall
- CQ2** Grant Lodge
- CQ3** Proposed Hotel



Cultural Quarter

Introduction

The Cultural Quarter has three key elements which are collectively intended to develop a creative arts centre, develop an evening economy in Elgin City Centre, attract and support tourists and encourage them to stay longer and improve connections between the High Street and Lossie Green/ Cooper Park.

Elgin Town Hall

It is proposed to refurbish, extend and rebrand Elgin Town Hall, building on the excellent work done by Elgin Town Hall for the Community group to create a sustainable multi- purpose theatre/ cinema and performance space, rehearsal rooms and spaces for creative industries. This will create employment and training opportunities and support growth in the creative industries. The outside of this listed building will be improved and a grand setting created through hard and soft landscaping to the north and south of the building.

Grant Lodge

Grant Lodge has been lying empty since 2003 and it is proposed to refurbish this grade B listed building to create a high quality visitor attraction designed to attract tourists and create a new destination as a food and drink heritage centre which also signposts Moray's wealth of attractions and activities.

Cooper Park

A new outdoor performance space in Cooper Park will complement the proposals at the Town Hall and Grant Lodge, along with a new accessible play area, re-opening of Cooper Park pond and proposed active travel connections to the core retail area.

Centrally located hotel

A privately funded high quality hotel is proposed, with a number of sites being considered, including potential at Lossie Green car park, offering an attractive environment adjacent to the Park and complementing the proposals at Elgin Town Hall and Grant Lodge.



CQ1 Elgin Town Hall - The Moray Creative Arts and Entertainment Centre

Proposals

- **Transform and extend Elgin Town Hall by 2026 into a cultural and creative learning and entertainment centre.**
- **Reconfigure the road layout at Trinity Place and Lossie Green car park to provide a hard and soft landscaped setting by 2026.**
- **Provide improved active travel crossings between the Town Hall and Elgin City Centre by 2032.**

Project aims to transform the category B listed Town Hall building into a cultural and creative learning and entertainment centre for Moray. The building will be altered internally and externally and extended to provide spaces for a main hall venue continuing to provide a wide range of concerts, festivals and shows, a small cinema space for alternative films, a restaurant, learning and creative spaces for creative industries and related courses with music and media studios and a FABLAB to use computers and other technology to craft items.

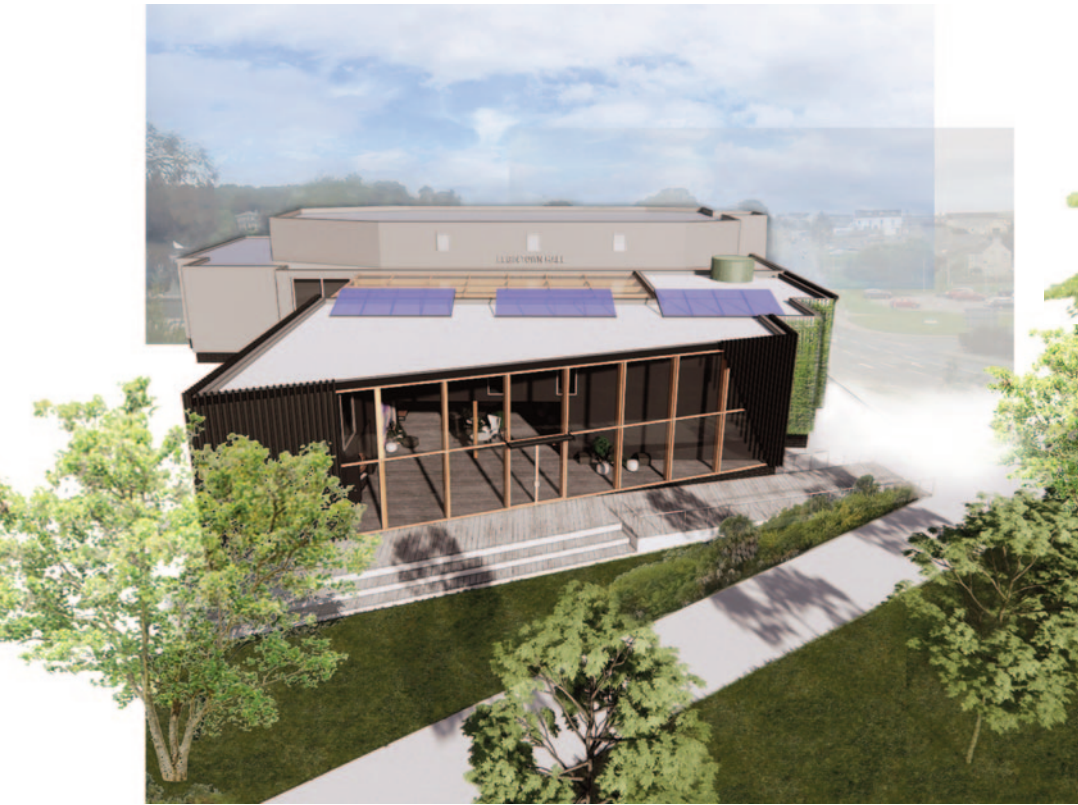
The exterior of the building will be revamped, with the existing tired concrete exterior finish freshened up either through aesthetic treatments to the building. Contemporary extensions to provide additional space will be added to the west and south of the building. The internal changes will improve the flow of users and the acoustics to allow multiple events to take place at the same time.

The spaces around the building will be transformed using hard and soft landscaping, which will create a grand plaza effect to the north and a more intimate meeting area to the south. The listed water feature and flag poles will be transformed and brought back into use.

The current road configuration at Trinity Place and car parking layout will be revised to incorporate the landscaping proposals, creating an attractive setting and approach to the Hall.

New active travel crossings (project CR1) between the Hall and Cooper Park and the Theatre and core retail area will be provided to improve pedestrianisation and cycle connectivity.







CQ2 Grant Lodge- Moray Food and Drink Heritage Experience

Proposals

- **Refurbish and extend Grant Lodge by 2026 into a high quality food and drink heritage visitor experience attracting 50,000 visitors per year.**
- **Create new gateways into Cooper Park and use new active travel crossings, signage, art and street furniture to encourage Grant Lodge visitors into the retail area by 2026**
- **Increase pedestrian footfall between Cooper Park and the core retail area by 15% between 2019 and 2030.**

Following a fire in 2003 Grant Lodge has been lying empty and has fallen into disrepair. It was built in 1766 to designs by Robert Adam and gifted to Elgin in 1903. This project aims to bring the grade B Grant Lodge back into use as a key element in the Cultural Quarter project. The building will be refurbished and extended to house a high quality food and drink heritage visitor experience.

The main aim of the visitor experience is to involve more people in the heritage of local food and drink in an exciting, educational, interactive and unique way, sparking their imagination, conjuring up scenes from the past and bringing heritage to life.

The centre will use state of the art technology, modern interpretive methods and a range of interactive exhibits to reveal the heritage behind the diverse range of food and drink that is produced throughout Moray.

To complement the food and drink experience, the centre will offer a tasting experience, guiding visitors through the nosing and tasting of some speciality whiskies, providing an informal introduction to Scotch whisky and in particular the Speyside creations. The combination of learning about whisky production, cask selection, whisky maturation and discovering the tastes, traditions and stories surrounding production will culminate with the opportunity to enjoy a dram on the viewing platform, looking across Cooper Park.

The Centre will act as a tourist signposting focal point, highlighting the food, drink and other leisure and recreational opportunities throughout Moray.

The refurbishment and extension of the building will be complemented by a new gateway entrance and potentially a new pedestrian crossing from near the Museum. Vegetation and fencing will be cleared from alongside the A96 to maximise visibility of this splendid building. The enhanced visitor facilities within Cooper Park and the outdoor performance space will all combine to make a day long/ multi day visitor experience.



CQ3 Proposed Hotel

Proposals

- **High quality hotel developed at Lossie Green or another City Centre location by 2030 to support Cultural Quarter project.**
- **Enhanced pedestrian and cycle crossings linking hotel site/ Cooper Park to Town Hall**

The Cultural Quarter project aspires to develop a high quality 4 or 5 star hotel centrally situated in Elgin to support the Cultural Quarter project and fill a gap in the current market. Following a site search, the Lossie Green car park is a potential location, offering a frontage onto North Road and a very attractive setting overlooking Cooper Park pond.

The hotel will support tourism in Moray and encourage visitors to stay longer to enjoy the Cultural Quarter and explore Moray as well as supporting the City Centre and the vibrant evening economy which is aspired to. Recreational uses and historic attractions are available immediately adjacent to the hotel site through a re-imagined Cooper Park and the site is located on the Castle- Cashmere- Cathedral trail.

The site has some constraints to be overcome, with contamination potentially requiring further remediation due to its previous land use, a flood risk assessment is required due to its riverside location, significant landscaping will be required to change the street scene and mitigate traffic noise along North Street.

The design of the building should tie in with the contemporary extensions proposed to Grant Lodge and Elgin Town Hall, supporting the creation of a vibrant evening economy.





Cooper Park



Cooper Park

Introduction

The Masterplan aims to refresh Cooper Park and re-connect it to the High Street by creating an exciting and attractive cultural and heritage offer for the community and visitors, catering for all of its users, young children, teenagers, families and those with disabilities. The vision for the park is “Cooper Park is a green, vibrant, inclusive place for everyone. A destination where you can be healthy, relax, learn, play and socialise.”

A mixture of different projects has been identified to achieve the vision and provide a varied offer that attracts people to Cooper Park. Pedestrian and cycle connections between Cooper Park and the city centre will be strengthened to encourage active travel.

A new fully accessible play area replacing existing play equipment, expansion of the skate park, creation of improved cycling routes and a beginners cycling area will deliver high quality facilities. The pavilion will be replaced with a new sports hub building offering a flexible space with enhanced facilities including meeting rooms, viewing areas, storage, showers, equipment hire and changing rooms. This complements proposals to use the pond for water based activities such as stand up paddle boarding and promoting Cooper Park as a family friendly cycling destination. The pond itself will be upgraded and transformed with an angel water fountain centre piece enhancing the setting of Cooper Park and providing a backdrop for a potential hotel site.

The construction of a raised boardwalk along the River Lossie will provide an outdoor learning experience within walking distance of a number of schools. The feasibility of creating linkages across the River Lossie into nearby Kingsmills providing a direct route for residents to access the park will be investigated. Interpretation panels will support learning around biodiversity and habitats along this river corridor, while additional land is identified to support the expansion of the existing community orchard and food growing activities. Furthermore opportunities for utilising renewable technologies for local energy production will be explored with the aim of further increasing resilience to climate change.

Expanded café provision at Elgin Library would enhance this community hub by increasing capacity and providing an attractive setting with a fully glazed extension providing views towards the Cathedral and across the pond. Additional seating and BBQ areas will be created immediately adjacent to offer the opportunity for informal outdoor dining. An outdoor performance area immediately adjacent to Grant Lodge will provide a unique opportunity for Elgin to host live theatre, cinema and music events and support the Town Hall and Plainstones during music, film and art festivals. The permanent amphitheatre design will accommodate an audience in excess of 100 and have a removable canopy to ensure a flexible venue that is not inhibited by poor weather.

CP1 Cooper Park Gateways

Proposals

- **Create attractive high quality gateways into Cooper Park by 2026 and increase the visibility of Grant Lodge.**
- **Strengthen active travel connections between the High Street, Moray Theatre and Cooper Park by 2032 and encourage residents and visitors to walk and cycle safely between these locations.**

Elgin High Street – Cooper Park Gateway

Cooper Park is currently hidden from the A96 by high fencing and vegetation that has the effect of screening all views of Grant Lodge and the wider park from this key route through Elgin. There is a lack of permeability between the park and the lower end of the High Street, creating a physical barrier. To further compound this there is no easily accessible crossing point in close proximity to where pedestrians and cyclists desire to cross, which further impedes connectivity.

To address this it is proposed to create a new gateway into the park which will create a strong visual connection between Grant Lodge and the A96. A safe pedestrian/cycle connection across the A96 as set out in the active travel proposals leading people to the lower end of the High Street will be created. The fencing and vegetation will be removed and a new attractive gateway and arrival point into the park created using high quality boundary materials including natural stone, wrought iron railings and attractive mature native hedge planting.

The footbridge over the A96 could be replaced with a new active travel crossing leading into North Port. Providing enhanced accessibility and a visual connection will encourage users to travel between the High Street and Cooper Park. This route will be upgraded with high quality public realm improvements including lighting and landscaping. An enhanced active travel route is also proposed leading from Cooper Park to Elgin Town Hall. Further detail is set out in the core retail area and active travel proposals.



Bishopmill – Cooper Park Gateway

This entrance to the park is run down and would benefit from being enhanced and improved. The existing bridge is structurally sound but could be cosmetically upgraded to create a feature gateway, for example through the use of different materials, colour, and lighting and ornate/artistic metal work statement railings. The bridge forms part of a key cycle route through the park which is well used by cyclists and pedestrians. As part of the upgrading of the bridge there is an opportunity to widen the access radii on/off the bridge into the park to assist cyclists wishing to turn left and right and create a more open entranceway into the park.

The existing stonework planters immediately adjacent to the bridge are in a poor state of repair and do not create an attractive entrance into the park. Removing this feature and replacing it with a public art feature combined with avenue planting along pedestrian routes would enhance the sense of arrival and create an attractive environment. The replacement red bridge on the other side of the park has utilised the former bridge to create a feature and there are sections of the bridge left over that could be utilised and painted different colours to create a public art installation

There will also be active travel connections linking Cooper Park to North Port and Elgin Town Hall.



CP2 Cooper Park Education, Health and the Environment

Proposals

- **Create a raised boardwalk adjacent to the River Lossie corridor that can be used as an outdoor learning environment.**
- **Expand food growing and explore the feasibility of local renewable energy production to increase resilience to climate change.**
- **Enhance biodiversity value across the park.**
- **Explore opportunities to create a direct connection linking Kingmills and Cooper Park.**

The project aims to support the expansion of existing food growing at Cooper Park, enhance the biodiversity value of the wetlands adjacent to the River Lossie and create an educational resource with interpretation for local schools and organisations. There is also an opportunity to explore local renewable energy production within Cooper Park, such as small scale hydro in the River Lossie, installation of small scale solar arrays and geothermal technologies.

Food growing is already happening at Cooper Park supported by the REAP Grow Elgin Project. Greenfingers has plans to create a food growing training centre at Cooper Park nurseries. Additional land has been identified to support the expansion of food growing within the park and create an expanded community food growing area. The stone and slate building immediately adjacent to the existing small orchard could be repurposed to create a small shop to sell produce.

The wetland area adjacent to the River Lossie is an under-utilised asset and would be significantly enhanced by the creation of a fully accessible raised boardwalk with viewing platforms capable of accommodating wheelchairs with appropriate passing places. Interpretation highlighting the natural heritage value of the river corridor would provide an excellent educational resource. There are several primary schools, nurseries and a secondary school within walking distance of the park that could use this area as a learning tool linked to the curriculum.

As part of the creation of a boardwalk the feasibility of creating a connection into Kingmills providing an attractive more direct route into the park will be investigated, alongside the potential to create a linkage into Deanshaugh taking account of future use of this area i.e. sports area. These connections will also provide access to an attractive riverside walk.



CP3 Cooper Park: Play & Recreation

Proposals:-

- **Remove mound and existing playpark and replace with open, inclusive playpark that caters for all abilities by 2030.**
- **Relocate public toilets, in the form of self-cleaning units, to playpark by 2030.**
- **Expand skate park to create separate areas for different ages/abilities by 2030.**
- **Upgrade path network to create cycle-friendly destination by 2026.**
- **Upgrade access to picnic benches and seating areas to be all-inclusive by 2024.**

The project aims to transform play and recreation in Cooper Park into an all-inclusive and welcoming area that promotes health and wellbeing for all ages and abilities.

The mound on the western boundary of the playpark - containing a slide and bridge - will be demolished, creating open views and making the playpark more visible. The playpark equipment will be replaced to create an inclusive and accessible playpark that caters for all abilities at the same time. The equipment will be vibrant and sustainable, making it an attractive and engaging area for children to play. Sensory equipment will be incorporated throughout the playpark and the wider park. Toilets will be relocated to the playpark, in the form of self-cleaning units, with the existing toilet building being repurposed for use in conjunction with the 'Performance Area' project. Access to picnic benches and seating areas will be upgraded to be all-inclusive.

The existing skate park is extremely popular and would be extended. This will allow for separate areas to be created in order to cater for different ages/abilities. Cooper Park is a popular place for people to teach their children to ride their bikes. The area adjacent to the Aviary would be transformed into a basic skills circuit. This would allow for a discrete but appealing area for younger children to learn to ride their bicycle and learn about road safety. The path network will be upgraded to encourage use and create a cycle-friendly destination.

A range of climbing boulders will introduce new climbers to the sport whilst providing opportunities for the more experienced climber. Features will be incorporated to allow for para-climbing.

A permanent orienteering course and sensory trail (with tactile/interactive equipment) will be set out across the park, encouraging all users to develop navigation and decision-making skills. A distance marked trail would link to the Moray Sports Centre, with points of interest for geocaching. The courses, with outdoor gym equipment incorporated at various stages, would promote health and wellbeing opportunities and encourage exploration of the whole park and wider area.



CP4 Cooper Park: Sports Hub

Proposal:-

- **Dual-frontage and modern multi-use sports hub by 2030 with adequate facilities to increase use of Cooper Park as a sports venue.**

The project aims to transform the sports pavilion in Cooper Park into a modern, multi-use sports hub with changing rooms, showers, storage, bike parking and hire and flexible space to increase the attractiveness of the area as a sports venue.

The existing pavilion will be replaced with a low scale, timber clad building with an increased size to provide space for all users of sports facilities across Cooper Park, including cricket, jogging and football. This will enhance the principal use of the site and result in an overall improvement of its sporting and recreation potential. A dual frontage will allow open views of Cooper Park and the Pond from the hub and provide a peaceful retreat for users to watch events.

The path network will be upgraded to encourage use and create a cycle-friendly destination. The pavilion is centrally located and will enable the provision of bike and water sports equipment hire linked to the pond, further encouraging the health and wellbeing opportunities for users.



CP5 Cooper Park: Pond

Proposals:-

- **Transformed pond with water fountain centre-piece by 2024, in the form of an angel, to provide an attractive setting for Cooper Park and potential hotel site.**
- **Provision of small scale water sports facility with equipment hire from adjacent Sports Hub by 2030.**

Project aims to transform the pond to provide an attractive setting for Cooper Park and potential hotel site alongside a water sports activity centre which promotes health and wellbeing.

A water fountain sculpture of an angel, depicting the Angel's Share and creating links with the refurbishment of Grant Lodge into a high quality food and drink and heritage visitor experience and a link to the angel's on the city crest on the Town Hall fountain, will form an attractive and unique centre-piece in the pond. The bushes and trees on the two islands will be pruned and maintained to enhance the biodiversity value and appearance of the area whilst preserving them as important habitats.

In conjunction with the aims of the Sports Hub and Play & Recreation projects, the pond will be enhanced to provide the opportunity to take part in small scale water sport activities to encourage health and wellbeing benefits. Activities such as boating and stand-up paddle boarding will be encouraged and equipment hire will be available from the dual-fronted Sports Hub. As far as possible, facilities will be all-inclusive and provide wheelchair accessible/level access to pond activities. Sensory equipment on boats and the pond islands will engage users whilst using the water facilities.





CP6 Cooper Park Outdoor Performance Area

Proposal

- **Create a 100 seat outdoor performance area by 2026 to significantly increase the attraction and appeal of Cooper Park for hosting events.**

A permanent inclusive amphitheatre capable of accommodating a 100 plus audience is envisaged using Grant Lodge as a backdrop whilst retaining views through the amphitheatre to the building.

An outdoor performance facility of this nature would enhance Elgin's arts and culture offer by hosting a variety of different events, creating a community asset and a destination for families and visitors. Such a venue could accommodate theatre performances, festivals and music and cinema events. This will be complementary to Grant Lodge and Elgin Town Hall. Elgin Library also regularly hosts book festivals and events which could be expanded to include an outdoor element and it could also be used by local schools and organisations.

A removable canopy is also proposed to ensure a flexible venue that is not inhibited by poor weather. The existing toilet building could be repurposed as a ticket office, food and beverage outlet and storage for the canopy. Alternative toilet facilities will be made available in close proximity to the amphitheatre and playpark in the form of portable self-cleaning toilets.



CP7 Elgin Library Café Extension

Proposals

- Expand existing café provision at Elgin Library with fully glazed extension.
- Increase the number of visitors to Cooper Park by 15% by 2032

A small scale café already operates from Elgin Library however it is not particularly visible due to the limited glazed frontage facing onto the road. There is scope to expand the café out toward to the pond by adding a contemporary glazed extension onto the library. The extension also offers the opportunity to create high quality views across the pond, wider park, Grant Lodge and the Cathedral. The café will have a more obvious presence in the park to attract visitors and support wider aims of making Cooper Park a visitor/family destination. An outdoor seating area on the grassed area opposite the library would expand the offer and appeal of the café and help create activity adding to the vibrancy of the park.



OP1 Roundabouts, Gateways, and Entrances

Proposal:

- By 2032 create attractive entrances/gateways into Elgin and Elgin City Centre through the redesign of roundabouts/entrance points.

The project seeks to create attractive entrances/gateways into Elgin City Centre that are welcoming and present a positive image of the city. The key entrances to the City Centre are the roundabouts to the west, north and east of the High Street. These roundabouts are currently planted but have little impact in terms of directing visitors or showcasing Elgin's unique heritage. These junctions will be reviewed in future to consider improvements to pedestrian/ cycle crossings at these locations.

The buildings around these key points of entry are generally attractive, historic buildings. The land currently occupied by the Wolf of Badendoch sculpture at the west end of the High Street provides a good opportunity for enhancing the entrance to the City Centre.

It is proposed that the Wolf of Badendoch sculpture is relocated as it is currently 'lost' in this location. The Strategy to enhance Gateways needs to address the poor gateways (loc bloc roundabouts) that currently exist on the main routes into Elgin.



OP2 Former Sawmill and Auction Mart sites, Linkwood Road

Proposal:

- **Mixed use development creating an attractive gateway into the city centre by 2028**
- **Surface water management in landscaped setting**
- **New active travel connection through reconfiguration of bridge or new crossing adjacent or near to existing bridge**

These sites are located on an important gateway into the City Centre and have been lying vacant for a number of years. While some development interest has been shown, nothing has come to fruition. The sites have a number of constraints including contamination, flooding, proximity to LPG tanks and road access, which need to be overcome and it may be that a joint development covering both sites is required to address these issues in a viable development proposal. Landscaping and surface water management can be used to soften and enhance this gateway and the biodiversity corridor along the railway line.

A new active travel connection either using the existing bridge or a new bridge immediately adjacent should be provided, with associated new active travel crossings as the junctions either side of the railway bridge act as a barrier to pedestrians and cyclists.







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