South Somerset District Council (SSDC) plans to regenerate the town centre of Yeovil through multiple projects as part of the adopted Yeovil Refresh strategy.

As part of this, the council is looking to enhance the public realm, including the streets and spaces, to make Yeovil more attractive for residents, businesses and tourists. The purpose of this exhibition is to provide local people and stakeholders the opportunity to view and comment on the emerging public realm designs.

Your comments and feedback will help shape the proposals.

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC REALM?

The Public Realm is defined as the space around, between and within buildings that are publicly accessible, including streets, squares, parks and open spaces. These are the everyday spaces that we move through and socialise within, the places where we live, work and play.

WHY ENHANCE THE PUBLIC REALM?

Consultation feedback during the development of the Yeovil Refresh in 2018 made it clear to SSDC that there were a number of priorities which should be addressed as part of any future enhancements. In summary people wanted to see:

- The main high street kept clean with nicer planters and other greenery, avoiding clutter and untidiness
- Improvements in vehicular and pedestrian access into the heart of Yeovil for locals and visitors;
- Concerns about some vehicle access to parts of the town centre (in particular on Middle Street) addressed;
- The town’s open areas made more appealing to encourage visitors.

South Somerset District Council is now in the process of developing public realm proposals that address these issues.

THE PROCESS

2018

Adopted 2018 Yeovil Town Refresh Adopted

April–July ’19 Baseline Appraisal & Concept Outline Design

July 2019 Stakeholder Engagement & Public Consultation


June–Sept 2019 Outline Design Development for key public realm projects

Sept–Dec 2019 Detailed Design of key public realm projects

2020

Summer 2020 Start of phased public realm enhancements construction works
2. Benefits of Public Realm Enhancements

**ECONOMIC BENEFITS**

- Well-planned improvements to public spaces within town centres can boost commercial trading by up to 40% and generate significant private sector investment (CABE Space 2004).
- In public realm works of similar characteristic and size an approximate relative increase on footfall of 10% was reported.
- Town markets and events can increase footfall by 15-27%, and increase spending.
- Public realm and lighting enhancements will help to support the night-time economy.
- Improvements to the public realm and pedestrian environment have been shown to increase residential and commercial property values.

**HEALTH BENEFITS**

- Approximately 85% of residents (typically) feel that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on their lives and on the way they feel.
- Increased levels of well-being and reduction in stress.
- Increased pedestrian safety through traffic calming measures.
- Increased walkability and cycle access leading to greater levels of activity.
- Reduction in noise and air pollution through reduced traffic and increased green infrastructure.

**ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS**

- Increased urban greening and access to green space.
- Increased biodiversity through increased planting.
- Reduced risk of surface water flooding through the use of sustainable urban drainage (SUDs) and increased tree canopy.
- Reduction in noise and air pollution.
- Increased urban shading and climate change adaptation.
- Improved air quality.

**SOCIAL BENEFITS**

- Reinforcing a sense of place.
- Providing an inclusive environment and free resource to be enjoyed by all of the community.
- A place for public events to bring the community together.
- Enhanced public realm has been linked to a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Diversity of uses within the town centre.

**Benefits of Urban Trees**

There are a number of benefits associated with street tree planting. These are illustrated in the diagram below.

- A 10% increase in urban green space can postpone the onset of health problems by up to 5 years.
- Research has indicated that a 10% increase in tree canopy was associated with roughly a 12% decrease in crime.
- Many species of wildlife depend on trees for habitat. Trees provide food, protection, and homes for many birds and mammals.
- There is up to a 24% reduction in particulate matter near a mature tree.
- Students who have a green window view recover from mental fatigue faster and thus pay attention for longer.
- Particulate levels on tree-lined streets can be up to 60% lower than those without trees.
- A series of international third-party studies have shown that trees can increase property prices anywhere from 5% to 18%.
- Trees can help reduce stormwater runoff. For every 5% of tree cover, stormwater runoff is reduced by 2%.

Source: GreenBlue Urban
The Yeovil Refresh identified the need for a Public Realm Design Guide that would develop principles to ensure that future public realm enhancements are of high quality and enhance the town’s identity and distinctive qualities. As well as respecting the history of the town, new schemes must also meet the needs of modern Yeovil through the creation of an accessible, legible and sustainable environment.

The emerging Public Realm Strategy is summarised below and will deliver:

- An enhanced public realm spine running through the town centre, which will provide a high-quality pedestrian environment with reduced traffic access
- Two high-quality and flexible town squares within the Borough and Bandstand, and enhanced pedestrian focussed streets
- Enhanced Town Centre gateways and arrival points
- Improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity along 'priority' routes connecting the town centre with surrounding public green spaces, residential neighbourhoods, and other significant locations.

The PRDG will provide guidelines on how best to enhance the public realm, including specific recommendations for street design, street furniture & materials usage, tree planting, lighting, wayfinding & public art.

How will the PRDG be used?

The PRDG is proposed to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in late 2019. This document will be used to inform designers and decision makers involved with future public realm improvement works. It will also sit alongside and compliment separate studies to be undertaken as part of Yeovil Town Centre Strategy including the; Town Centre Access Strategy, Car Parking and Road Signage Strategies, Walking and Cycling Strategy, Improved Pedestrian Wayfinding Strategies.
4. Public Realm Proposals

A number of concept schemes have been developed to enhance the public realm along the town centre spine. These proposals have been informed by the emerging Public Realm Design Guide. These priority projects are shown above and in further detail over the following boards.

We welcome your comments and feedback in relation to these emerging designs.

Artists impression of potential enhancements to the Borough.

South Somerset District Council
5. **Public Realm Proposals**

**Westminster Street/High Street**

- Enhance the streetscape through new high-quality paving materials, street furniture and street lighting
- Increase pedestrianised space by widening of footways
- Relocate on-street parking
- Provide street tree planting
- Create a new gateway into the town centre at the western end of Westminster Street
- Potential relocation of some bus services in Westminster Street from The Borough.
6. Public Realm Proposals
The Borough

Key Issues
- Private vehicles entering the Borough during restricted times through lack of traffic enforcement
- Bus shelters create barriers and buses queue in the carriageway
- Views of St. John’s Church largely blocked
- High vehicle movements detract from public realm function

Key Opportunities
- Enhance the public realm through new high-quality paving materials, street furniture and street lighting.
- Retain the existing bus lay-by within the space and locate new bus shelters to a less intrusive position.
- Introduce an enhanced crossing at King George Street and Middle Street to improve pedestrian movement.
- Remove the existing Wine street access to increase the pedestrian area.
- Retention of existing trees within the space and potential for new planting.
- Potential to relocate the existing taxi rank on Silver Street to improve access between St. John’s Church & Quedam Shopping Centre.
- Potential new power points and Christmas tree pole to facilitate events.

Further Considerations
We are considering the potential to relocate some of the existing bus stops within the Borough to Westminster Street to reduce existing bus through-traffic.
7. Public Realm Proposals
Middle Street

Key Opportunities
- Enhance the public realm through new high-quality paving materials, street furniture and street lighting.
- Minimise traffic to improve the pedestrian environment, improve air quality and reduce carbon footprint.
- Introduce new planting areas and street tree planting.
- Creation of a new pedestrian gateway and increased footway widths within Bond Street.

Illustrative plan showing potential public realm enhancements

CGI of potential public realm enhancements

South Somerset District Council
8. **Public Realm Proposals**

**The Bandstand**

**Key Opportunities**
- Develop a high-quality and flexible events space that can support a range of activities.
- Possible provision of a new water feature, information kiosk and/or TV screen that can be used for information and sporting events.
- Introduce new high-quality seating, planting and lighting to encourage night-time use.
9. **Public Realm Proposals**

**Middle Street East**

**Key Opportunities**

- Enhance the streetscape through new high-quality paving materials, street furniture and street lighting
- Introduce new street tree and ornamental planting to increase planting within the street
- Create a new gateway into the town centre from South West Terrace

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**Wyndham Street**

**Key Opportunities**

- Introduce an enhanced pedestrian crossing linking Middle St, South Western Terrace and Wyndham St
- Enhance the streetscape through new paving materials, street furniture, street trees and street lighting
- Reduced carriageway width and replacement of merge / diverge lane with a give-way from Wyndham Street to Newton Lane to slow vehicle speeds
- Build upon Highways Enhancements already consented for Newton Road
SSDC consider that Yeovil town centre would benefit from a programme of shop front improvements to complement the public realm enhancements, and are preparing a Shopfront Design Guide which will be used as guidance for the design of new and enhanced shop frontages within Yeovil.

**Why Produce a Shopfront Design Guide?**
Poorly designed and badly maintained street frontages detract from the visual qualities of an area and affect the retail viability and local economy. Suitably designed shopfronts are crucial for the preservation of the character of buildings and areas, as well as for the attractive overall appearance of shopping streets and the impact on their commercial success.

The design guide will aim to set out basic principles of good shopfront design and to help to create enjoyable and attractive shopping areas in Yeovil. The key principles include:

- Introducing guidelines that are appropriate to varying types of shopfronts to enhance and unify the character of Yeovil town centre
- Replacement of A-signs, which create street clutter, with a coordinated shopfront signage strategy
- Protect and enhance historic features and unique character of existing shopfronts
- Encourage the use of street licenses to allow on street cafe and restaurant seating that activates streets and spaces

**How will the Shop Front Design Guide be used?**
It is intended that the Shop Front Design Guide will provide a guidance framework and be adopted by SSDC as an SPD. It will be used by a number of parties, including:

- Business owners seeking to enhance their own shopfront
- Designers of new shopfronts or those involved with enhancements to existing shopfronts
- Decision makers whom will be assessing that proposals of shop front enhancements accord with the best practice guidance provided
- Potential to inform potential funding schemes to support traders to enhance shopfronts

**How will shop front enhancements be paid for?**
It is intended that shop front enhancements will principally be funded by the owner or occupier. However, SSDC are considering potential funding mechanisms that will assist with any upgrades similar to the successful scheme in Area East.
11. Next Steps

We will use your feedback to inform and shape the development of public realm designs, the Public Realm Design Guide and Shop Front Design Guide.

DELIVERING THE PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS

**What are the next steps?**

We will review all feedback received from the stakeholder and public consultation as part of the ongoing design process. The public realm enhancement project designs will then be further developed until December 2019. The Public Realm Design Guide and Shopfront Design Guide, which will be reviewed by SSDC Committee leading to adoption as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) in late 2019.

How will the projects be phased?

It is intended that the first projects will be delivered from summer 2020 and will be phased over a period of years, linked to funding availability. Works to Middle Street / Upper Street / Wine Street are currently being implemented as part of a traffic regulation order and works to Westminster Street and Bond Street could be prioritised to develop momentum for further projects. These initial project areas are shown on the plan below.

How will the public realm enhancements be funded?

A number of funding sources have been identified, including existing SSDC funds, potential borrowing, developer contributions via CIL or section 106 and receipts from the asset management strategy. The council has also successfully secured funding from the High Streets Fund, with potential to access additional future funding.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Thank you for taking part in this consultation. We would be grateful if you could take time to submit a feedback form to tell us what you think. You can record your views by:

1. Completing one of the feedback forms and depositing it in the response box before you leave
2. Completing an online feedback questionnaire which can be found at
   [www.southsomerset.gov.uk/yeovilpublicrealm](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/yeovilpublicrealm)

*All feedback must be received by Saturday 17th August 2019*