

## **Yeovil Refresh plans given major boost after District Executive committee endorse the Yeovil Public Realm Design Guide**

Plans to transform the look of the town centre of Yeovil took a major step forward today when South Somerset District Council's District Executive Committee endorsed the Public Realm Design Guide for adoption by the council.

The Yeovil Public Realm Design Guide is a key foundation in the work to deliver the Yeovil Refresh. It creates a template for any building project that happens in Yeovil town centre, which includes projects that the council is planning to deliver in the main streets.

The Design Guide is a supplementary planning document so will help guide other developers when designing public areas within the town centre area. It also includes a shopfront guide which is meant to help businesses by giving a clear style and quality when making or upgrading a shopfront.

The adoption of the guide will be formally completed through approval at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 19 March.

Councillor Peter Gubbins, executive portfolio holder for Yeovil Refresh, said: "The adoption of this Public Realm Design Guide for Yeovil will really set the tone for how we envisage Yeovil town centre to look in the future and I'm very pleased that the fellow Members of District Executive have endorsed the document.

"We want to improve the visual appeal of Yeovil providing a better experience for all of those that use the town centre. We hope that this will help attract people to come and live, work, shop, learn and visit. The Public Realm Design Guide and Shopfront Guide will set the standard for what we expect to see with future development and enhancement works. This really does now signal the start of improvement works that we have planned for areas of the town centre, including the Bandstand, The Borough, Middle Street, Lower Middle Street and Westminster Street. We expect to hopefully be able to unveil our final detailed designs for these areas in the coming months ahead before we commence work later on in the year."

The adoption of the Yeovil Public Realm Design Guide creates a Supplementary Planning Document which supports relevant policies in the Council's adopted Local Plan (2006-2028), but it also signals a key milestone in the Yeovil Refresh project by completing Project P1: An adopted Public Realm Design Guide.

**What is the Yeovil Refresh project?**

The Yeovil Refresh project aims to create a town centre that will be a vibrant place to live, work, shop, learn and visit. Working with consultants and key partners, South Somerset District Council has been exploring how it can best invest in Yeovil's future.

Consultation events were held in 2018 to help us identify priority projects. Here's a recap of what you told us:

- You'd like to see the main high streets kept clean and better kept with nicer planters and other greenery, while keeping the streets from being too cluttered.
- You'd like to see improvements in vehicular and pedestrian access into the heart of Yeovil for locals and visitors
- There are concerns about some vehicle access to parts of the town centre (in particular on Middle Street)
- You'd like to make the town's open areas more appealing, using the space that is available to encourage visitors.

From the feedback obtained, the following priority projects were set:

- Assessing further pedestrianisation of parts of Middle Street.
- The creation of a Public Realm Design Guide to help shape the use and look of open spaces in the town centre
- An assessment of access to the town centre
- A review of car parks in Yeovil (assessing current and future provision, cycle parking, electric charging points and more)

### **Why are you investing time, money and effort into regenerating Yeovil town centre?**

Yeovil is the primary market town in South Somerset and when you visit, we want you to have a great experience so that you want to come back.

But it's not just about visiting the town centre; we want to provide opportunities for people to live there, with a mix of housing so that residents will shop local and create a vibrant town centre that other people will want to visit and retailers will want to be a part of. Offering a variety of choice to dine is also important and will help independent and national businesses to flourish in Yeovil.

Nationally, the old traditional high street idea that town centres are filled with rows and rows of shops is outdated. We want to create an experience where the high street offers a mix of housing, service industry and shops to help counter the effects of online shopping.

**If the Yeovil Public Realm Design Guide is adopted at Full Council later this month, what's the next steps of the project?**

There is a lot of work bubbling away behind the scenes that the public will not see the benefits of yet, including work on a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Programme that will look to improve links to the town centre.

We know you are well aware of the work we have been doing on the public realm areas – the areas that are outside shops such as The Bandstand, The Borough, Middle Street, Lower Middle Street and Westminster Street. In the coming weeks, we hope to be able to unveil the final designs of these areas and give details of which public realm area will be worked on first and enhanced.