

## LSDG open meeting 29/11/10 – A Summary

### Short Term / Long Term Vision:

The LSDG vision for Leeds City Centre South involves a long term commitment, possibly projecting as far as 2050. Considering this, there was an early consensus during the discussion that the long term vision should aim for a much wider influence and consider not just the City but also the wider region. We should consider what the development of Leeds can give to the wider region as well as what the region can bring to Leeds.

The time span proposed for the development of the City Centre South brings up questions as to how we create a 'framework' for the area that is as applicable to today as it is in 20 to 50 years time. By 2030 the vision will have had to morph to include new building typologies and should adapt to accommodate new social issues.

During the meeting it was commented that the immediate short term vision is clear, so is the vision for the long term. However, the medium term vision that takes us from the short term 'do it tomorrow' proposals to the final vision is unclear. There was a view that by starting 'tomorrow' and getting it 'right' in the City Centre, we can create a ripple effect of redevelopment outwards that will propel itself and guide the vision through the medium term.

The driver for much of the discussion at the meeting was the short term vision; where do we start, what can be done tomorrow as a catalyst and what happens to vacant land before it is developed? It was agreed that 'The Bridge Head' (a bridge and a pocket park linking Criterion Place with the South Bank proposals) would be a good first step forward and a catalyst to the development of the South Bank area. It was considered that maybe the implementation of a green infrastructure to connect the City Centre South could be the starting point that we're looking for.

Another query, in the discussion was; if we don't use land today what will happen to it in the short term and what can it do for us? One key suggestion was to plant the long term vacant areas as an aesthetically and environmentally positive solution.

### Identity of the City:

Leeds is praised for its unique character; however there seems to be a drain on the creativity of the City. How do we emphasise the character of the City and bring it to the fore? It was suggested in the discussion that Leeds needs to be marketed, maybe it should be 'sold' as a product, as has been done in Manchester?

### City Centre Living:

The discussion of the capacity study focused on housing and infrastructure associated with day-to-day living in a City Centre. There was a majority consensus that the vision should provide dwellings for people across the entire spectrum of society.

Currently, the City Centre is the home for young 'business types' with City jobs and a busy lifestyle. The 'trend' then suggests that these young individuals or couples move out to the suburbs to create a family home. The question of the discussion was, 'why should families be forced out of the City Centre if they want the benefits of a family home'? Most agreed that we need to provide some City Centre houses with a bit of private green space, that has access to schools nearby (maybe newly built), which can be adapted as the family grows ('long-life, loose-fit') and sits within a diverse community

There was however a contrary opinion that the 'conveyor belt' system works as it is, with young people living in the City Centre and older people / families living in the suburbs. People move to the area that suits their needs the best, so why change this?

Another, important issue to consider is the future pattern of home ownership. In the future, will people want to own their home or will we have moved towards the European model of mostly rented accommodation? These possible changes in housing needs will need to be considered now, when creating a framework that has to be applicable in 20 to 50 years time.

### **Infrastructure:**

During the meeting the main infrastructure considerations discussed were transport and education. It was agreed that we do need to create a framework of infrastructure for the City Centre South before investors will even consider the area above others. By creating a framework we can re-assure investors that there is a future for development of the area and we can give them an idea of what may surround them in terms of amenities and infrastructure.

There was also a majority agreement that we need to provide (high quality) new schools within the City Centre South to attract families in the long run. However how many and which stages of education will have to be considered after more in depth research of catchment areas and the capacity of the area? There was the contrary opinion that we don't need to think about new schools in the area, instead families can live here and commute out to the schools in the suburbs everyday. How sustainable is this?

If we run with the consensus that new schools will be required, when do we provide them? There is a 'chicken and egg' situation here, do we build the schools first to attract families to the area, or do we wait until there are families in the area before we provide schools? It is worth considering that, whatever the situation; setting up a new school will take a while.

The discussion then moved on to transport, with the main question being; do you need a private car if you live in the City Centre? Many were of the opinion that if there was a quality public transport system, then there is no need for a car if you live in the City. However it was also agreed that you may not need a car day-to-day, but we can't just design out cars from City Centre housing and we should provide people with the option.

It was commented that it is currently too expensive to own a car if you live in the City Centre and that is one reason why people move out into the suburbs. It is clear that we need to provide an efficient and integrated public transport system within the City and out to surrounding areas if we are to attract people to the idea of City Centre living.

**As a summary, we need:**

- housing for the entire spectrum of society – especially family housing
- outdoor space, schools and adaptable/expandable housing to attract families
- an integrated public transport system in the City Centre
- short term proposals for catalysts to the long term development
- a viable and adaptable framework for the long term vision
- a vision that considers the entire region
- an emphasis on the identity of Leeds.

**To be sustainable, development needs to be an evolution, not instantaneous!**