



A VISION FOR THE HOLBECK VIADUCT PROJECT

A collaborative working document aiming to outline the collective aspirations of local stakeholders and community groups for the future development of the Holbeck Viaduct, South Leeds.

March 2021



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HOLBECK
VIADUCT
PROJECT

“This is a cracking opportunity to harness the inherent power of infrastructure to directly support communities for the long term... I’m moved by the inclusive ambitions at the heart of this vision – but frankly, who wouldn’t be?”

Hiro Aso, Urban Strategist & Leeds Station Masterplanner
MARCH 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Story So Far...

At over 1.6km long and with 92 archways, the prospect of re-purposing the Holbeck Viaduct has captured the imagination of city planners, designers, local residents and community groups alike.

Discussions surrounding the redundant rail line have been on-going for many years within the community. However, the success of similar precedents elsewhere, coupled with the need to successfully integrate existing communities with expansion of the city centre to the south of the River Aire, have re-ignited conversations of potential new uses and the need to identify financial support and investment opportunities.

Locally, a project has been initiated by a consortium of people, who have come together as ‘The Holbeck Viaduct Group’. The aims of the group are to involve local people of Holbeck and surrounding areas in setting out a series of proposals that will seek to find new uses for the disused rail track, enabling it to become a valuable community asset and a sustainable link to the city centre.

The aspirations of the Holbeck Viaduct Group coincide with the city’s plans to re-develop the South Bank. Leeds City Council and a host of stakeholders have consulted and collaborated to create a vision of creating a ‘distinctive global destination for investment, sustainable living, learning, creativity and leisure’.

This document seeks to set out a framework vision for the viaduct, to demonstrate the potential of the space as a local and city asset. It then goes onto to suggest an indicative timeline that align with the longer-term aspirations of the city, and in particular, the Leeds 2023 International Cultural Festival.



An existing view from on top of the disused viaduct structure looking north towards central Leeds.

2.THE URBAN CONTEXT

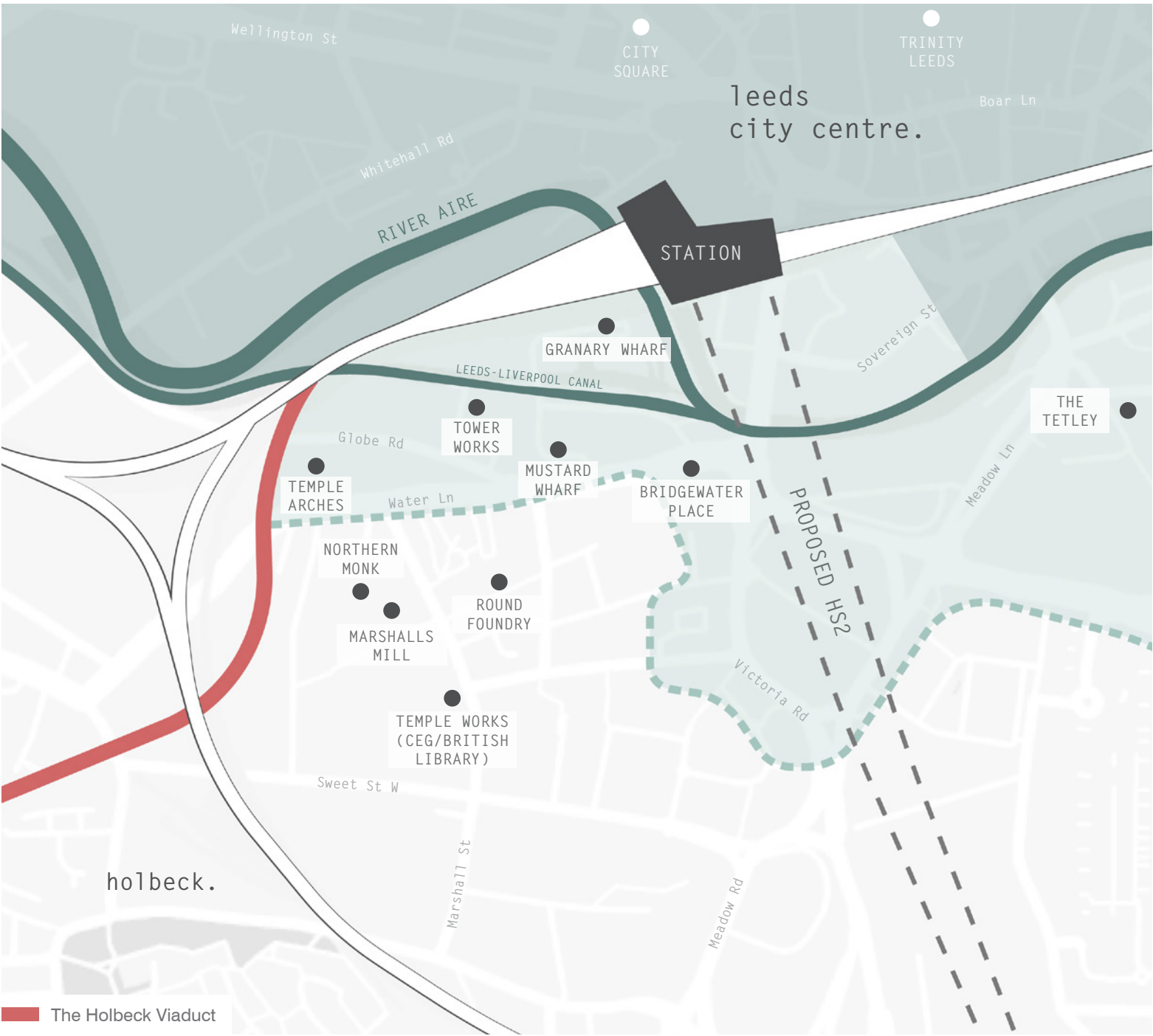
An Expanding City

Extensive plans for the major regeneration of the South Bank of Leeds are outlined in Leeds City Council’s adopted South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework Supplementary Planning Document. Newly developed areas, south of the River Aire will see the emergence of vibrant new communities, with a focus on residents living, working and enjoying a host of new retail and recreational facilities that will be brought forward to accommodate the needs and aspirations of Leeds as a major UK city.

As the South Bank vision becomes a reality, the viaduct will remain as an elevated physical feature and a visual reference to the architectural mastery of Victorian era Leeds. The redundant line will form part of the city scape in many newly created views projected across the city from within tall buildings proposed for the area.

As demonstrated with other notable redundant railway line developments, the Holbeck Viaduct can create a distinguished linear public space within this section of the line. It has the potential to greatly enhance the setting of new South Bank development and reinforce the concept of the South Bank as a destination, be used as a powerful marketing tool for the South Bank, the city and to help increase the sale and let value of new development. In line with other current ‘Greening the City’ initiatives, it can also be used as an asset with which to strengthen green infrastructure and increase biodiversity within an urbanised setting.

- Existing City Centre
- Indicative City Centre Expansion Zone



(Top) View of the viaduct from Globe Street with the proposed Temple Arches development to the left.

(Middle) Tower Works is set to become pivotal within the city centre expansion zone.

(Bottom) The Leeds-Liverpool canal with views south towards the Holbeck Viaduct.

2.CONTEXT

Safeguarding Existing
South Leeds Neighbourhoods

Whilst the South Bank conveys a message of inclusivity, the transformative growth and extensive regeneration of large areas of the city has the potential to significantly change the character and unspoken ownership of place. Whilst unintentional, this level of change can lead to disconnecting existing communities from their surroundings. When coupled with the arrival of new workers, residents and a significant increase of visitors and affluence, there is a risk that existing communities may be left feeling unwelcome. Relationships can be nurtured by establishing strong and meaningful connections and by extending the perceived benefits of regeneration into the heart of existing communities.

The Holbeck Viaduct provides a platform which can significantly benefit the city and South Bank whilst reaching out to communities in a meaningful way, reducing any perceived separation between existing and new communities.

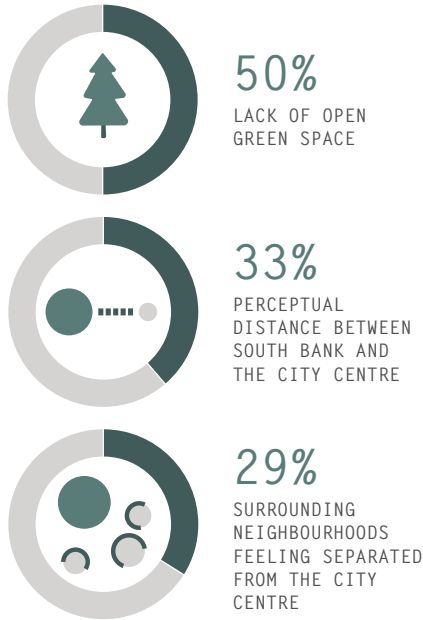
When consulted on the development of the South Bank, local community groups felt that a lack of green space and a poor connection between the city and surrounding communities are the most important challenges. Currently, the viaduct severs communities with a linear physical barrier, thus limiting permeability and connectivity. However, it has the potential to provide a direct link between the city and outlying communities. This physical link can remove the need to navigate major roads and to connect a series of existing green and public spaces. Collectively, these spaces can help to increase green infrastructure, providing a robust off-road network which will link neighbouring communities and the city centre.



The Holbeck Viaduct

Aerial view of the Holbeck viaduct which stretches from South Bank through Holbeck and continuing south towards Beeston.

What do local community groups believe are the most important challenges for South Bank?



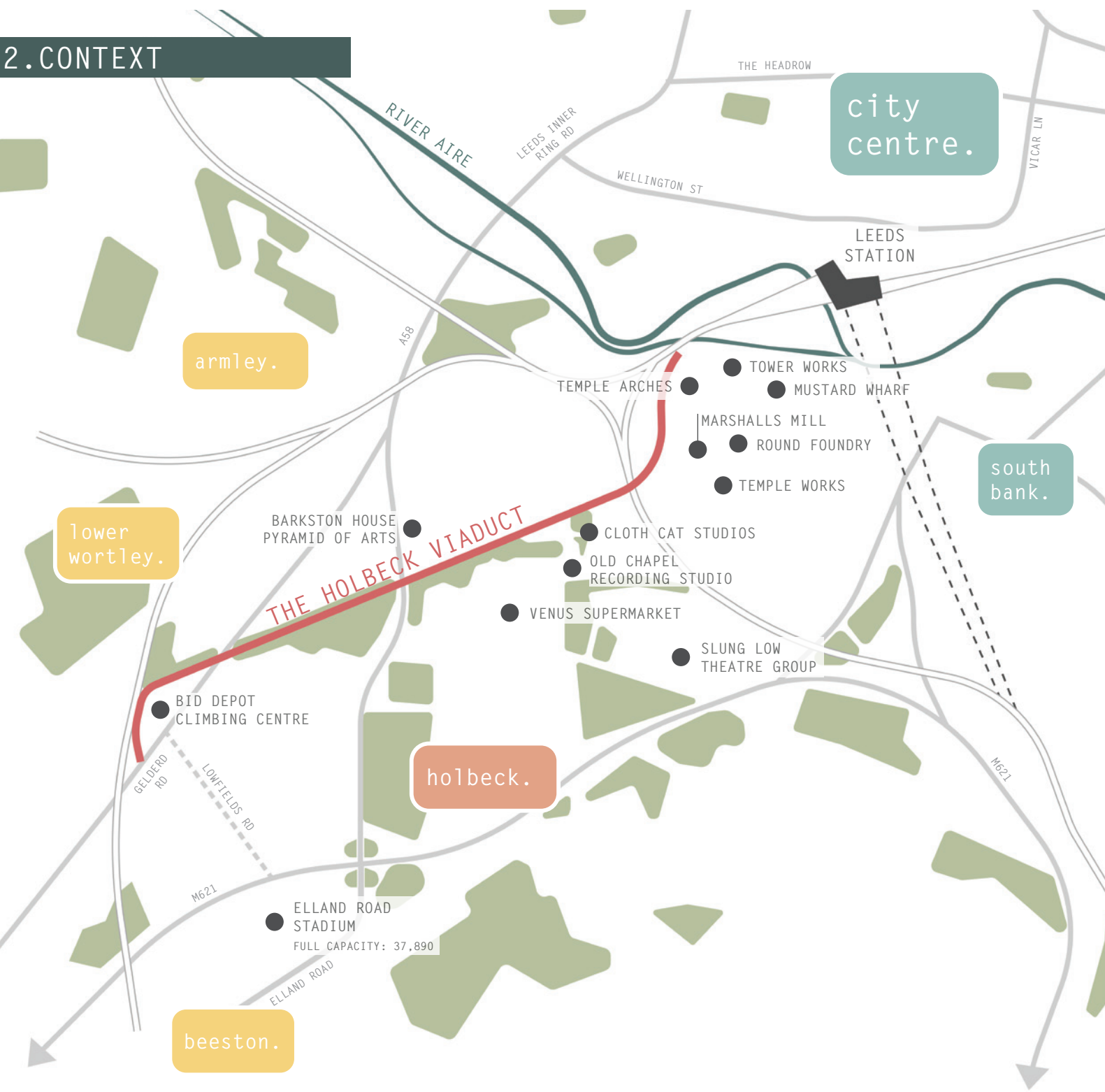
What do local people want to see in the City Centre and South Bank?



South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework SPD Consultation Draft 2017

<https://southbankleeds.co.uk/assets/documents/171107-south-bank-leeds-regeneration-framework-web.pdf>

2.CONTEXT



Safeguarding Existing
South Leeds Neighbourhoods

As the rail line leads away from the city, the character atop of the viaduct can be designed to become increasingly domestic in its appearance and functionality, with greater emphasis on community involvement from the design stages and bid applications, to implementation, management and upkeep. This approach has the potential to provide new skills and training, promote interactions and understanding which are the basis of community cohesion.

Newly created green space with local involvement and ownership has the potential to be the catalyst for activating existing, underused areas of open space that surround the rail line.

Aside from promoting the harmonious integration within and between new and existing communities, there are other substantial benefits to be gained from this approach. These include social and cultural integration, inclusivity and shared activities, the promotion of sustainable travel, reducing emissions and improving health and wellbeing through promoting greater physical activity.

These types of opportunities should be afforded to existing communities as a by-product of large-scale regeneration.



(Top) The viaduct's arches running through underutilised green space in Holbeck

(Middle) A community event organised by Slung Low, a theatre company based in Holbeck

(Bottom) Underpass on Lowfield Road linking Gelderd Road to Elland Road Stadium.

3.THE CONCEPT

INCLUSIVE REGENERATION

The Holbeck viaduct and redundant rail line provide an effective thread, linking the city with Holbeck and communities further afield such as Elland Road, Beeston and Lower Wortley. The line weaves between commercial, residential, light industry and areas of open space and is completely free from vehicles, making it safe and direct.

Key benefits of Re-purposing:

A sustainable connection: The route of the line effectively connects Leeds Rail Station to Leeds United and Elland Road. The route of the Holbeck Viaduct provides a safe and direct route, which is free from vehicular traffic. The line terminates at Lowfields Road which leads directly to Elland Road and is used by fans on match days. A route such as this will promote sustainable travel and can increase the opportunities afforded to local businesses via increased footfall (similar to the Water of Leith walkway in the heart of Edinburgh).

A safe route: The line can provide a safe route for many residents between home, work, the city centre, a world class waterfront and major transport connections. This promotes active travel and reduces journeys made by vehicles which can positively contribute to cleaner air and healthier lifestyles.

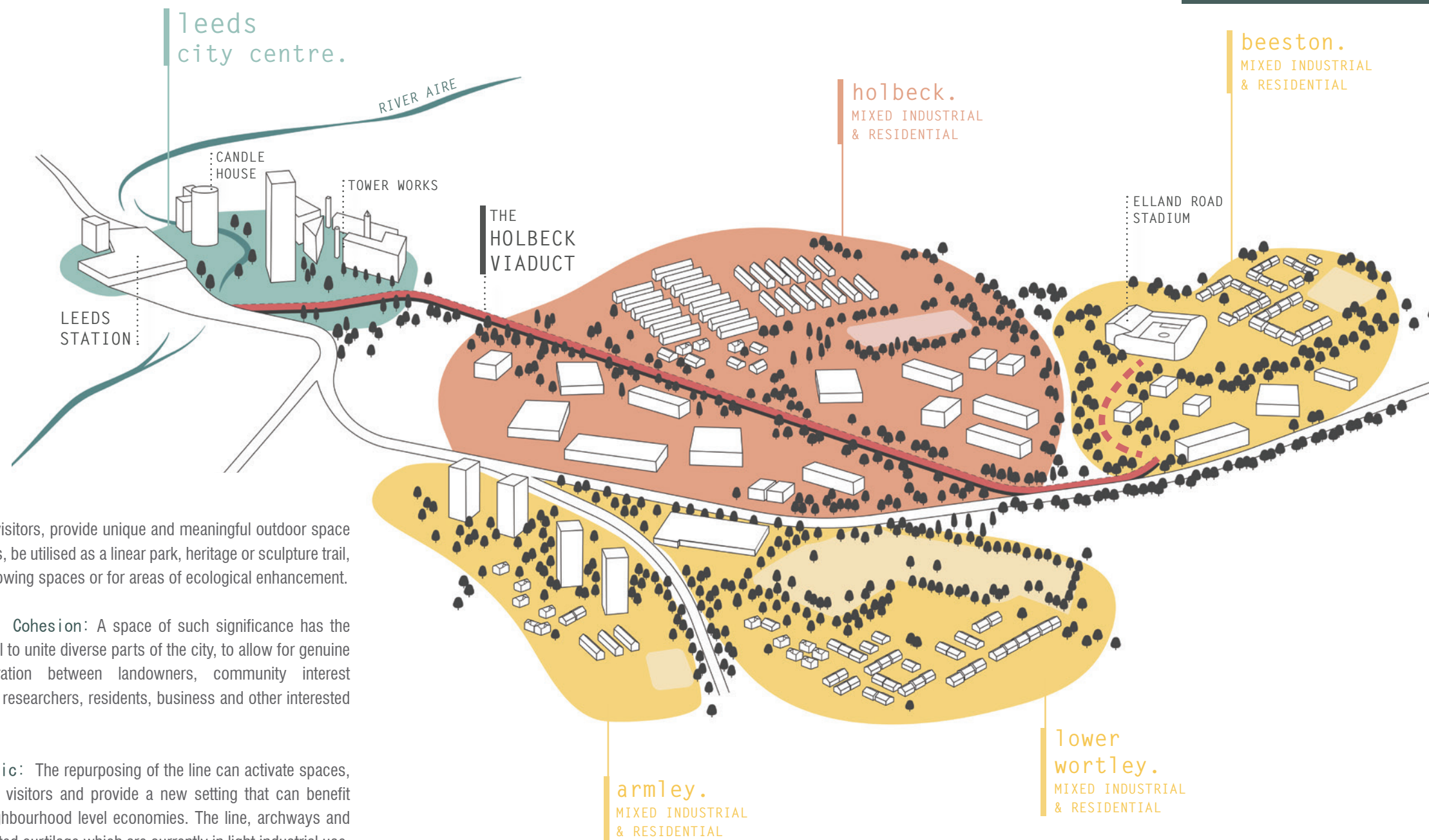
Harnesses and preserve our heritage: The physical appearance of the viaduct is part of the Holbeck psych. The re-purposing of the viaduct will ensure its preservation and upkeep. It will also reveal hidden places that are unique to the area and which form part of Leeds' engineering heritage from the Victorian era.

New destinations: The elevated nature of the line provides opportunities for a range of places and uses. These can

attract visitors, provide unique and meaningful outdoor space to locals, be utilised as a linear park, heritage or sculpture trail, food growing spaces or for areas of ecological enhancement.

Social Cohesion: A space of such significance has the potential to unite diverse parts of the city, to allow for genuine collaboration between landowners, community interest groups, researchers, residents, business and other interested parties.

Economic: The repurposing of the line can activate spaces, draw in visitors and provide a new setting that can benefit the neighbourhood level economies. The line, archways and associated curtilage which are currently in light industrial use, have the potential to accommodate a wide variety of alternative uses from office, retail and hospitality to community facilities.



Imagining a future scenario...

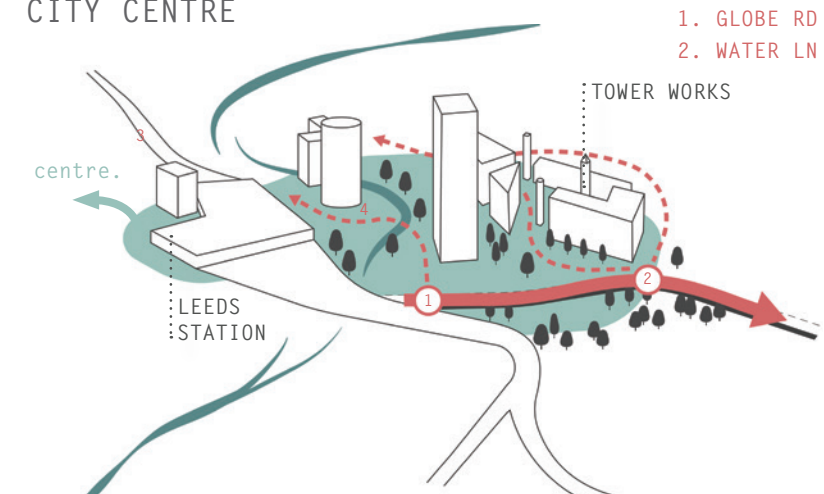
This internationally renowned linear park is elevated with views across the newly developed South Bank. The elevated linear park is a familiar feature that dates back to the Victorian era. It is now a prominent landmark that is visible from many of the new tall buildings. It provides a place for respite, relaxation and exercise. It caters for business meetings, social gatherings and informal interactions. The archways are a renowned destination that attracts visitors who are drawn to the area to work and socialise in the many restaurants, bars and shops.



3.CONCEPT

building communities

CITY CENTRE

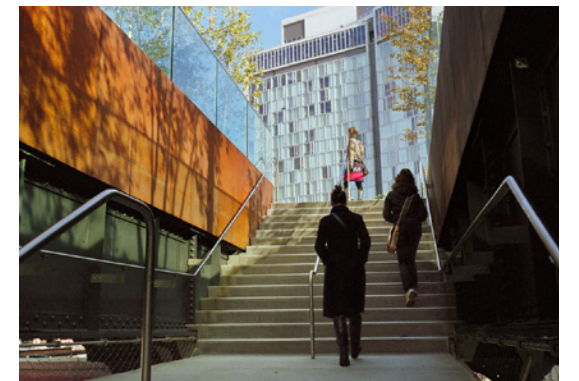


The regeneration of the South Bank will improve the physical structure and the economy of this emerging part of the city. As with all major urban regeneration projects, the re-purposing of historical structures provides a level of familiarity and continuity when transitioning from the old to the new. In much the same way as Temple Works, Marshalls Mill, Giotto Tower and Verona Tower serve to retain character and continuity within the changing landscape, the Holbeck Viaduct can provide that same source of visual continuity.

The viaduct provides is a very distinct structure, that if unlocked, can become a key destination that provides for city needs whilst reaching out far into neighbouring communities.

Examples of potential supporters / funders:

- Leeds City Council
- Inward / Direct / Commercial Investment
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- Central Government Grants
- Leeds BID



(Top) Empty railway arches provide opportunities for commercial activity: restaurants, bars and shops

(Middle) An elevated approach to Leeds City Centre

(Bottom) Access points to the viaduct could be strategically integrated into the South Bank masterplan to create a local asset for the emerging population



Imagining a future scenario...

The community of Holbeck have an invested interest in their stretch of the viaduct. They have come together to raise funds, design and develop ideas and to take ownership of sections of the viaduct. Food growing spaces, exercise groups, gardener groups all occupy spaces atop of the viaduct, hosting classes and community events which has helped to increase the skill levels of residents. Many of the residents use the viaduct to journey into town and enjoy relaxing walks as their children are free to cycle and walk without the dangers posed by busy roads.

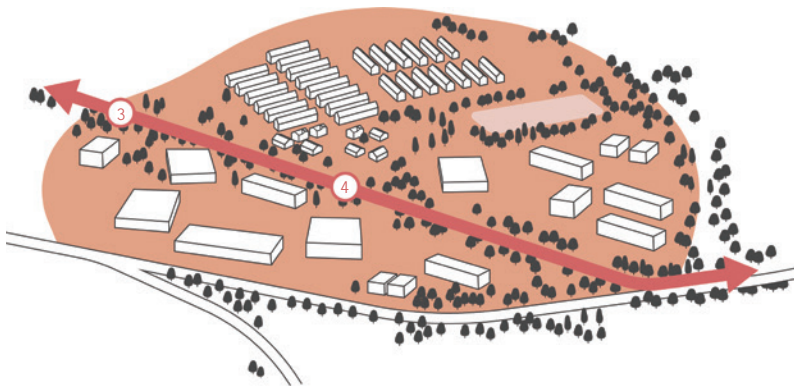
The arches below are host to a range of new business who have committed to employing locally. This has created new jobs and has activated what was previously unused space.

3.CONCEPT

safeguarding communities

HOLBECK

3. BRIDGE LN
4. DOMESTIC RD



Thriving communities share a common vision that encourages participation, provides focus and conveys a sense of belonging. The Holbeck Viaduct has the potential to provide a unique platform on which the community can converge, be heard and where the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued. The regeneration of the Holbeck line will also greatly improve local infrastructure and aesthetics by providing quality outdoor space, that is managed by the community to promote active and social recreation.

Examples of potential supporters / funders:

- Holbeck Viaduct Project
- Beeston & Holbeck Area Committee
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- Leeds Community Foundation
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Woodland Trust
- Highways England
- Network Rail



(Top) Opportunities for community based programs that could encourage local ownership.

(Middle) The viaduct has the potential to provide an inclusive space for recreation and activity.

(Bottom) The viaduct arches could create a space for local enterprise and creative industry.

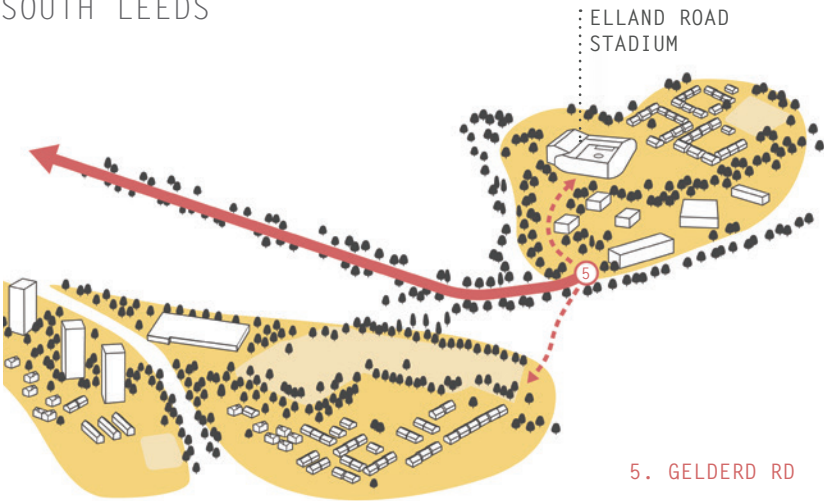


Imagining a future scenario...

Andy is Leeds United fan and has been going to home games for over 10 years. Before the re-purposing of the viaduct, he used to drive a 30-mile round trip to Elland Road. He struggled to park and often left games early to prevent sitting in match day traffic. He now gets the train to Leeds. He makes a 20 minute walk to the ground, stopping for food bought from one of the many stalls located along the route. When the match has finished, he walks with his friends back to the train station. Trains are frequent to his town, so on more occasions than not, he stops for a drink or two on his way to the station to reflect on the game and to enjoys time with his friends in the city.

connecting communities

SOUTH LEEDS



The route of the viaduct presents an opportunity to provide seamless cycle and pedestrian connections between neighbourhoods, communities, open space and places of work. The elevated rail track can provide sustainable transport options that are safe, inviting and free from vehicles. Local journeys by car can be significantly reduced, whilst the current ‘semi-industrial’ landscape of Gelderd Road presents spatial opportunities for ‘out of town’ parking, with workers and visitors being empowered to walk the line rather than congesting inner-city areas.

Examples of potential supporters / funders:

- Beeston & Holbeck Area Committee
- Leeds United
- Local Sustainable Transport Fund
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Highways England Designated Funds
- White Rose Forest



(Top) Opportunity to enhance local infrastructure

(Middle) Improving travel for people arriving at Leeds station and travelling south towards Elland Road Stadium.

(Bottom) Simple landscape interventions would vastly improve pedestrian and cycle links between the city centre and south Leeds.

4.NEXT STEPS

A number of permanent and temporary uses for the viaduct have been suggested, including a community garden, green walkway, arts space, park, cycle path, events hub, public allotment, café, music venue, viewing platform, local landmark or other community-focused projects.

As part of Holbeck Viaduct Project's feasibility work, consultations and stakeholder engagements will need to align with the anticipated timeline for the project, with a view to securing access to and use of the viaduct by 2023.

The aims and aspirations of the Holbeck Viaduct project coincide with a year-long programme of creative experiences by way of the Leeds 2023 International Cultural Festival. A festival of this scale promotes new connections, collaborations, creative excellence and friendships. The viaduct offers a unique destination in which to combine the city's heritage with its aspirations to be a cultural giant in the world.

There lies an opportunity to join efforts to bring the viaduct into focus, gain support for the project, unlock a unique space that has the capacity to accommodate all forms of culture; from dance to design, art to architecture, poetry to pop, sculpture to theatre and all whilst leaving a meaningful lasting legacy.

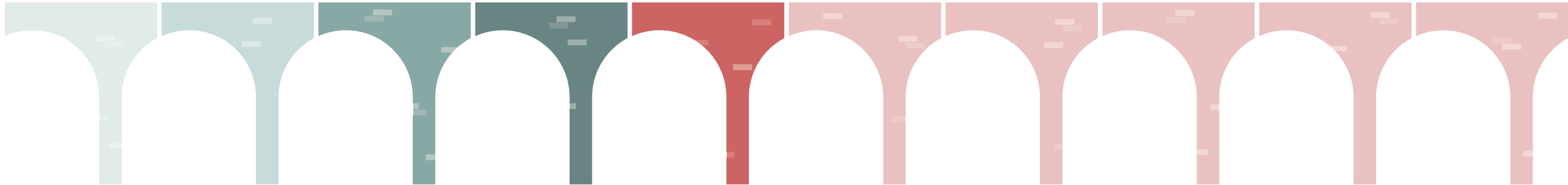


To initiate conversations and begin to outline a way forward, we propose the following:

LEEDS
2023

THE LASTING LEGACY

DEMOCRACY	VALIDATION	ADVOCACY	FINANCE	CELEBRATE	COMMUNITIES	DESTINATIONS	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE	CONNECTIVITY	COMPLETION
<p>Holbeck Viaduct Project to focus on gaining wider community support and grassroots fundraising.</p> <p>Identify early-stage funding for preliminary design exercises and public consultation</p>	<p>Establish a new focus group with represents from local organisations, community groups and other stakeholders including the Leeds 2023 International Cultural Festival.</p> <p>Utilise design and stakeholder involvement to identify interventions and options.</p>	<p>Approach Leeds City Council and find a Project Champion to gain wider support to secure seed investment and sponsorships.</p> <p>Arrange meetings to understand and meet the needs of Network Rail and other relevant land owners in order for them to grant permission to access.</p>	<p>Combine grass roots fundraising and seed investment to apply for focused grants and funding.</p> <p>Produce Vision Document as basis of community-led interventions.</p>	<p>Utilise the viaduct as cultural venue during Leeds 2023.</p> <p>Leave a legacy that can be continued to be developed by the Holbeck Viaduct Project and focus group.</p>	<p>Continue to work together to develop the Holbeck section of the line, identifying funding opportunities and working collaboratively to manage and implement work.</p>	<p>Further works to the city section of the viaducts to continue as the south bank develops.</p> <p>Further capital raised through CIL as development progresses and through the continued promotion of the project by the focus group and invested partners of the business community.</p>	<p>Develop a site wide green infrastructure strategy that can be implemented in parts as funding becomes available.</p>	<p>Complete the sustainable connection between the city and Gelderd Road. This will promote sustainable and active travel to meet the aspirations of the city, help reduce traffic on the A643 Armley Gyratory and help Leeds United to promote sustainable travel on match days.</p>	<p>Holbeck Viaduct and line completed and fully functional.</p>



DEMOCRACY

THE STORY SO FAR

Various local community groups have come together with a shared interest in developing the Viaduct:

- Holbeck Viaduct Project Group
- Community Representatives
- Local Design Professionals

VALIDATION

KEY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The following organisations and stakeholders have expressed their enthusiasm for the project so far:

- Leeds 2023 International Cultural Festival
- Leeds Business Improvement District
- Leeds Civic Trust
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- CEG North
- Hiro Aso, Urban Strategist
- Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP Leeds Central
- Beeston and Holbeck Ward Councillors

ADVOCACY

CONSENSUS BUILDING

In order to further gain momentum, we recognise the next steps will involve approaching the **Leeds Council Regeneration Team** with the aim of appointing a **Project Champion** who recognises the collective vision and has the motivation to propel the project forward.

This will allow us to prepare an approach to **Network Rail** and other **relevant land owners**.

At this stage, consultation sessions and workshops will be undertaken to evaluate and develop design options.

ACTIONS

SHORT TERM

Create a series of **Meanwhile Spaces** as part of the **Leeds 2023 International Cultural Festival** to raise awareness and promote the scheme to local community groups, businesses and other stakeholders.

LONG TERM

Produce an **Options Appraisal Document** exploring options for the future of the Holbeck Viaduct.

BUILDING MOMENTUM

HOW DO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS FEEL ABOUT OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE HOLBECK VIADUCT?

“

This is a cracking opportunity to harness the inherent power of infrastructure to directly support communities for the long term. It will put right an unintended but often divisive consequence of these heroic structures, to engage those that have been disconnected. I'm moved by the inclusive ambitions at the heart of this vision – but frankly, who wouldn't be?

Hiro Aso, Urban Strategist & Leeds Station Masterplanner

“The Holbeck Viaduct Project is an inspiring and visionary placemaking proposal, that has the potential to connect the city centre to wider communities to the south of the city. LeedsBID, representing over 950 business organisations supports the aspiration of this initiative.”

Andrew Cooper, Chief Executive - Leeds Business Improvement District

CEG's Temple scheme seeks to improve the connectivity between the city and the communities of Holbeck and Beeston, an aspiration that is shared by the Viaduct Project. We welcome any opportunity that brings new safe routes to economic, social and cultural opportunities as well as breathing life and vitality into the area.

David Hodgson, Head Of Strategic Development - CEG North

This is an exciting vision that, most importantly, proposes to bring a disused asset back into the hands of the community. We look forward to the next steps which include securing access to enable 'meanwhile use' onto the viaduct by 2023.

James Whitley, Holbeck Viaduct Project

It's a great document and a great vision, which I strongly support.

Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP Leeds Central

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For more information please visit:
<https://www.holbeckviaduct.org.uk/>
<https://leeds2023.co.uk/>

