

# holbeck viaduct project



**Pre-feasibility report – July 2017**

**Transforming Holbeck's iconic viaduct into a vibrant  
community green space for everyone to enjoy**

# Executive summary

**We want to transform Holbeck Viaduct into a vibrant community green space for everyone to enjoy.**

**The project will repurpose the atmospheric viaduct, providing cycling and walking routes alongside spaces for people to enjoy panoramic city views, with opportunities for public art, and for plants and wildlife to thrive.**

**The historic viaduct runs from just outside Leeds train station, through Old Holbeck and Holbeck Urban Village, and onwards through Beeston to near Elland Road. It is a magnificent brick structure of 92 arches built in the 1880's which fell into disuse in the 1980's. With the growth and development of South Bank Leeds, now is the time to secure a positive future for this historic landmark, helping to regenerate the area and providing a catalyst for development and community engagement.**

**The project will open during 2023, with lots to do between now and then.**

**We hope that you will support and challenge our community based proposals; and that you will help us to take the next step and assist with the production of a detailed feasibility study to underpin future fundraising.**





hhi!





## 1. Vision

The aspiration is to re-open the viaduct as a thoroughfare linking Elland Road and Beeston to the City Centre, with access points at Domestic Street and Holbeck Urban Village. The project can also contribute to a circular through route if there is a link to the proposed Cycle Superhighway to Elland Road.

Although there will be echoes of the acclaimed Highline in New York and the Promenade in Paris, our aim is to develop an affordable project which truly reflects Leeds and its local communities.

We will create an iconic, inspiring landmark for Leeds which is also a practical and useful asset for local residents, organisations and businesses.

We will continue to develop the project in a highly participatory manner – drawing on the time, skills and resources of a wide range of people and organisations. In this way, we hope to demonstrate the power and possibilities of citizen-led action to deliver deep, sustainable regeneration and build a strong sense of popular ownership of the project.

## 2. Products and services

A wide range of features and activities can be included within the project, and will be developed in conversation with local residents and workers. Ideas so far include: Walking, cycling, connection route. Allotments, gardens, wildlife, nature reserve. Children, play, art, music, dog walking, yoga, star gazing, sport. Community events such as fireworks, bonfires, picnics, bbqs. Cultural activities and events such as public art, open-air film or theatre. Street markets, craft markets, food markets, street performers, fairs. Corporate activities and events, photo shoots, fashion shows.

## 3. Designs and technical

A local Leeds business, Edward Architecture, has prepared a high level ecology report and a basic structural report (visual survey from ground level only). They have also developed sketch designs and options for access to help visualise the opportunities of the project. Further detailed technical surveys and designs will be needed, and will help us to map out the detailed technical tasks and timelines across design, planning, implementation and maintenance.

We will review in particular the key risks and challenges that the project poses and how they might be addressed e.g. height, access generally, access for people with specific accessibility needs, access for maintenance, the relationship to HS2 & HS3, safety and security. Our reviews of similar projects make us confident that these issues can be successfully addressed.

There are options for phasing delivery to be considered. The project could be delivered all in one go, or different sections at different times, or implement to a basic level across the whole and seek enhancements at a later date.

## 4. Stakeholders

There are two broad groups of stakeholders – people who will create the project and people who will use the project – and hopefully a large overlap between the two!

Some people and organisations will have a formal stake and role in the project, perhaps as landowners, e.g. Network Rail, developers, businesses in the arches. Regulatory bodies will also play a role, e.g. the local planning authority. Others will have an informal stake and role, e.g. people who live or work in the area. We have made initial contact with key stakeholders in Leeds City Council, Network Rail and also CEG South Bank developers, but detailed discussions will need to take place in the next phase.

We have also contributed to the Holbeck Neighbourhood plan and attended South Bank Masterplan events.

Some people and organisations will bring specialist knowledge or experience, e.g. people with a stake in old railways, in the environment, sport, sports teams, leisure, walking, running, allotments, play, disability groups, other equality groups, health & wellbeing groups, artists and arts groups, children, dog walkers, older people, digital groups, history groups, schools, science, environmental groups such as Groundwork and TCV, cycling groups, Sustrans.

We will also continue to grow our project team, and friends of the group, which include people who will deliver the scoping work, people who will deliver the feasibility stage, people who will deliver implementation, and people who will maintain and develop the end product. We meet regularly and have developed a strong Facebook and Twitter following, which will grow as the project progresses.



## 5. Communications, engagement and marketing

Communications, engagement and marketing will be important at all stages in the project. The team already use a public facing Facebook group, Twitter and a website. They also liaise with local press on a semi-regular basis.

As the project develops during 2017 the aim is to engage more extensively with local communities and community groups, to ensure a hands-on approach to the development and delivery of the project.

## 6. Organisation and governance

We are currently operating as a group of individuals, volunteering our time, and communicating through Facebook, Twitter and a website.

We will develop more formal arrangements as the project grows, and anticipate that arrangements may need to flex over time to reflect the different needs for developing the project designs, for implementing the project works, and for maintaining the end product.

We have two main options for governance which we will review during the feasibility stage. We could formally constitute as a stand-alone community group, perhaps as a community interest company, or we could aim to work under the umbrella of an existing community, travel or environmental charity.

We do not currently anticipate having a permanent staffed structure, but we do want to ensure that people and organisations that work on the project are paid appropriately, and have access to good quality support and training.

## 7. Timeline

Our proposed timeline is:

- 2016 – 2017 pre-feasibility scoping
- 2017 – 2018 detailed feasibility and stakeholder engagement
- 2018 – 2020 fundraising and securing land and planning
- 2021 – 2023 constructing, planting and opening

We will aim to implement interim works, such as art or landscape projects that can take place in advance of the main project.

## 8. Finance

Previous reviews of the viaduct have estimated implementation costs at £6 million, based on full works and high-end specifications.

The team have reviewed the currently available information and aim to secure a design that can be implemented within a £2 million capital funding envelope. This would provide a basic accessible space for all to enjoy, with the main costs anticipated to be the provision of access landing points along the route together with any specialist clearance and resurfacing that may be required. We will ensure that the design and development of the scheme seeks to minimise on-going maintenance costs, and will aim for the project to be self-funding in the long-term.

The next stage feasibility will include some more detailed designs and costings to validate the project approach.

## 9. Demand and benefits

The focus will be on local residents and workers, improving cycle and walking routes between Elland Road, Beeston, Holbeck and the City Centre, and providing an interesting and enjoyable public open space.

Subject to the end uses that are chosen, there will be opportunities for local small businesses, artists and creatives to grow their businesses. Subject to the end uses that are chosen, there will be opportunities for local charitable organisations to showcase their expertise and deliver activities in an iconic environment.

## 10. Risks and issues

The team have identified risks and opportunities flowing from the height and structure of the viaduct. These will be addressed through design proposals, and have been successfully managed in projects elsewhere. There are also risks and opportunities flowing from change in the area, for example HS3 may offer opportunities for access points, but may block use of the viaduct. These risks and issues will be developed further during feasibility, including how they will be addressed and proposals for funding.

## 11. History of the viaduct

The project team are compiling information on the history of the project for a later edition of this report. For those of you who can't wait, have a look at [lostrailwayswestyorkshire.co.uk](http://lostrailwayswestyorkshire.co.uk)

## 12. Examples from elsewhere

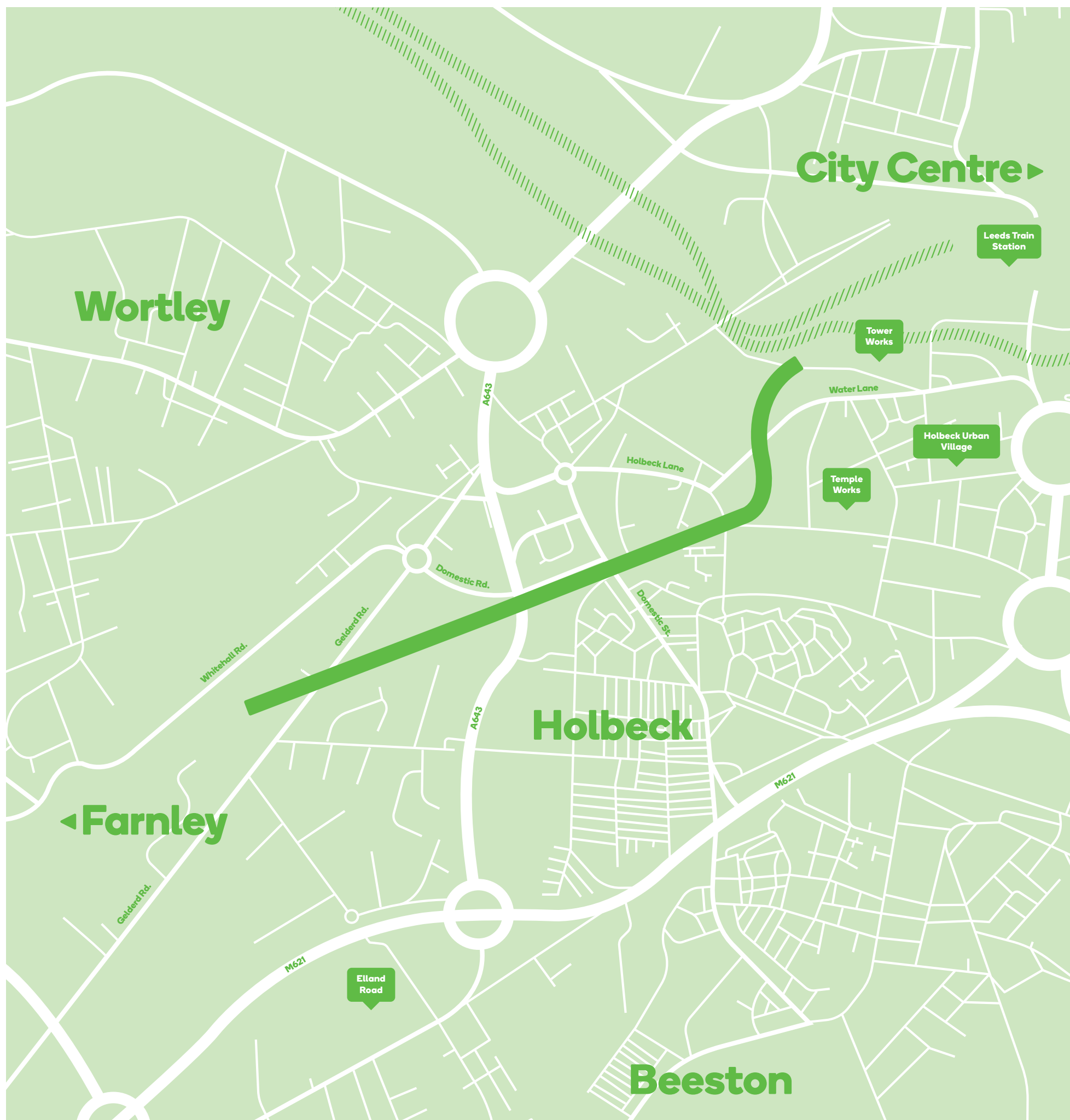
There are similar schemes internationally, such as: Chicago, Paris, and New York and more locally schemes in development include those at: Leeds Whitehall Road, Camden Highline and Liverpool Friends of the Flyover. We will use the lessons learned from these and other projects to inform our Holbeck Viaduct work.

## 13. Approvals

We will need to secure formal approvals from a number of organisations:

- Land owners: Network Rail plus others at the planned landing points.
- Planning and building regulations.
- Specialist reviews by health and safety, fire safety, community safety, disability access and, subject to end uses, licensing and business rates.
- Subject to organisation and governance reviews, approvals or registration may be needed with charity commissioners and Companies House.

# The route



**The viaduct is over 1.6km long, originates in the City Centre near Tower Works, runs through Holbeck and ends up at Gelderd Road near Elland Road.**



# Stakeholder mapping

**A Stakeholder mapping workshop was held in May 2016 to identify the key stakeholders in the project.**

**Mapping focused on organisations, groups and people that could be one or more of the following:**

- **Users**
- **Developments / Landowners**
- **Local Businesses**
- **Political / Permissions**
- **Supporters (Financial)**
- **Supporters (Non-financial)**
- **Opponents with the project**

**From this analysis we developed a list of stakeholders, all of which could interact with the project. A key part of this project will be to develop an effective stakeholder consultation and communication approach to manage these groups.**

## Specific consultation activities

**As well as the stakeholder workshop, the group has engaged with the wider community in the following ways:**

- **Had initial discussions with Network Rail.**
- **Had a stall at the Holbeck Festival in Summer 2015 to promote the group and obtain local feedback.**
- **Provided input into the Holbeck Neighbourhood plan.**
- **Provided input into the South Bank Leeds Development Plan and taken part in workshops organised by the South Bank Leeds on “Culture and Heritage” and “Neighbourhood”.**
- **Met with the developers CEG regarding their plans for the CEG South Bank site off Water Lane and they were broadly supportive of our plans and we agreed to keep each other informed of progress.**
- **Maintained a Facebook and Twitter presence to promote the group activities – over 500 people have liked our Facebook page and over.**
- **Hosted an open workshop at Sheaf Street Cafeteria in late November to allow people to drop in to provide feedback and contribute towards the report.**

- Advertising and Marketing Agencies
- Advertising Revenue
- AECOM
- Age Concern
- Any locally based company with corporate social responsibility funds
- Arena
- Arriva and First Bus
- Art Groups
- Asda
- BT, Virgin, Sky
- Burberry
- Businesses under the arches
- Canals and River Trust
- Canals, British Waterways
- Carillion
- Carillion – Tower Works
- CCG (Health promotion)
- Centrica
- Charity funding groups
- Civil Engineering Groups
- Clayton Hotel
- Co-creators
- Commercial Pub
- Community Pay back
- Commuters
- Concessions / stall holders
- Corporate Hire (if allowed)
- Cross Keys
- Crowd funding
- Crown Point etc.
- Cycle Groups
- Cycle rental – e.g. Evans at train station
- Cycling groups
- Cyclists
- Education Groups
- Elland Road Ice Rink – new
- EU
- Event and market promoters
- FA
- Farnley – good link for commuting
- Festivals / events
- Football fans, particularly away fans
- Gelderd Road businesses
- General public
- Google
- Granary Wharf
- Green NGOs
- Green Party
- Guide dogs
- Heritage Groups
- High Speed 2 / 3
- Historic England
- Holbeck Elderly Aid
- Holbeck Gala (early July)
- Horticultural societies
- Iron Works
- Kaiser Chiefs
- Labour Party, Green Party, UKIP, Conservative Party, etc.
- Land by Commercial pub owner
- Land trust
- Leeds 2023 City of Culture
- Leeds BID
- Leeds City Council
- Leeds Civic Trust
- Leeds Council
- Leeds Cycle forum
- Leeds Cycling Campaign
- Leeds Cycling Forum
- Leeds Education
- Leeds Innovation Fund
- Leeds Music Trust
- Leeds Philanthropy Fund
- Leeds Seed Bank
- Leeds United
- Leeds Voluntary Action
- LEP
- Local and regional media – tv, print, radio, social media
- Local historians
- Local NGOs
- Local Old Holbeck Residents
- Local Orgs e.g. Holbeck Working Mans Club
- Local residents
- MEPs
- MIND
- Motiv8 Gym
- MPs – Hillary Benn: Labour
- National Grid
- National Lottery – Big Lottery Fund
- National Media - BBC, ITV
- Nature lovers
- Network Rail
- Network Rail Property (formerly Spacia)
- New Holbeck Urban Village developers
- NHS
- Non local residents
- Northern Monk
- nPower
- Nursery Groups
- Other highline type schemes – e.g. New York, Paris
- Out of the Woods
- Park and Walk / Park and Cycle schemes
- Pension investment companies
- Photographic clubs
- Pigeon Detectives
- Politicians
- Professional Institutions: CIHT / CILT / ICE
- Railway / Viaduct Preservation Heritage Societies
- Railway enthusiasts
- Railway Heritage Trust
- Residents commuting
- RNIB
- Rotary
- Round Foundry Media Centre
- Round Table
- Running and fitness groups
- Sex workers
- Sky
- Slung Low – Holbeck Underground Ballroom
- South Leeds Life
- Structural enthusiasts
- Sustrans
- TCV – Volunteering
- Temple Works / Burberry
- Tom Bridges + Lee Arnell (LCC) – Economy + Development
- Tourist board
- Tourists
- Tower Works
- Transport for the North
- Universities
- Volunteers
- Walking about disused viaducts magazines
- Waterfront Festival
- Welcome to Yorkshire
- Whoever buys the train station
- WYCA
- Yorkshire Evening Post
- Youth Inclusion Groups

# Risk log

In September 2016 a workshop was conducted to identify potential risks. This forms part of an on-going mapping exercise that will be continually updated.

Category	Description	Action
Economic & Financial	Regeneration in the wider area stalls eg as a result of Brexit.	
Economic & Financial	Unable to generate sufficient funds to undertake the works in full.	
Economic & Financial	Unable to contain the costs of the works.	
Economic & Financial	Unable to contain the costs of maintaining the viaduct once the works are complete.	
Economic & Financial	Unable to generate sufficient funds to maintain the viaduct once the works are complete.	
Economic & Financial	Fewer sources of funding available or more competition for funds following Brexit and political change.	
Economic & Financial	Network Rail Property may be able to rent out units below the viaduct more readily or for higher rent.	Talk to Network Rail Property.
Economic & Financial	Other neighbouring landowners may be able to rent out or sell premises more readily or for higher sums e.g. British Waterways.	Find out who owns land and property in the area.
Environmental	Protected species may have made their home on the viaduct.	Survey and respond e.g. install bat boxes.
Environmental	Contamination may be present on the viaduct.	Survey and respond; Look at experiences of other viaducts.
Environmental	Contamination may be generated by users in the arches below – past, present, future.	Survey and respond; Look at experiences of other viaducts.
Environmental	Asbestos materials along the track.	Survey and respond.
Legislative	Health and safety requirements may prohibit some designs and activities.	Survey and respond; Look at how other viaducts have resolved these issues.
Legislative	The structure becomes listed – this would protect the structure but may also limit the changes we could make, or increase their cost e.g. when we seek to add access points.	
Legislative	Disability access rules will help ensure and accessible structure.	
Legislative	Railtrack will have legal obligations to maintain the structure which will could help to make our project an appealing way forward.	
Legislative	Is land ownership simple or complex; are there covenants restricting use – this applies to the viaduct itself and also to the landing points for access and the routes from there to public footways / public highway.	We need to investigate title matters with land registry and Railtrack.
Organisational	Leeds City Station might be sold to a private operator, which may reduce the willingness to engage, or increase the restrictions, or alternatively provide another sponsor who would actively support the project.	
Political	Central government is discussing a further reorganisation of rail, which may change the goal posts, or at least distract the key players.	
Social & Community	Users may misuse the space, creating problems for others.	
Social & Community	Users may vandalise the spaces that are created – or neighbouring spaces – and may be violent to others or with each other.	
Social & Community	There may be pockets of opposition to the plan because users may be able to overlook currently private spaces, and/or throw rubbish or other objects in to spaces.	
Social & Community	Inertia and/or apathy from local residents and businesses at all or any stages of the project.	
Strategic	Negative press regarding other schemes (e.g. London Bridge) may rub-off on this project.	
Strategic	HS2 and HS3 may become enablers of the work and funding – or may impose restrictions – or may prevent the project - or delay decisions on the project.	Identify routes and current timescales. Engage with HS2 and HS3 planning teams to make them aware of the project and seek their support.
Strategic	Redevelopment schemes are underway or seeking formal approvals before we are ready and/or without accommodating the project and / or without benefitting the project.	Identify current redevelopment and planning activity. Engage with planners and landowners and architects to make them aware of the project and seek their support.
Strategic	CEG’s redevelopment scheme offers an opportunity for funding or support but alternatively may progress before we are ready and/or without accommodating the project and / or without benefitting the project.	Identify current position. Engage with developer and planners and their wider teams to make them aware of the project and seek their support.
Strategic	Supercycle highway routes are being developed for the area – an opportunity to engage and a risk of alternative routes being chosen.	Identify current plans, progress and timescales; Engage with planning teams to make them aware of the project and seek their support.
Technical	Risk of falling from the viaduct, including jumping or being pushed.	Survey to check wall heights are reasonable for the drop. Find out what other viaducts and high routes have done.
Technical	Trips, falls and accidents generally on the viaduct itself both during improvement works and once open to the public.	Conduct full risk assessments of designs and respond. Conduct full risk assessment of work tasks and respond.
Technical	Electrical and other cabling laid along the track creating a hazard and/or needing to remain and be protected from damage.	Survey and respond.
Technical	Subsidence on or underneath or near the viaduct route – past, present, future.	





**Holbeck Viaduct is an acclaimed masterpiece of Victorian engineering, built for the London and North-Western Railway Co in 1882. But it fell into disuse in 1988, and has laid empty since. Yorkshire Forward (the former Regional Development Agency) commissioned Bauman Lyons Architects to conduct feasibility work on reopening the viaduct as a public space in the 2000's, as part of the 'Holbeck Urban Village' regeneration programme – but this was wound up in 2010, following the economic crisis. The current, citizen-led project has been running since 2013.**





5k there & back running route / abseiling venue / advertising / allotments / art & craft workshops / art displays / augmented reality / boot camp / commercial shops – food / bowls / children's play – souvenirs / corporate volunteer days / connection route / carols / Easter egg hunts / cycle route / educational visits / link / fitness classes / interesting gardens / events – niche art / photography shows / events hire / formal garden / beer events / falconry displays / giant murals / fixed telescopes / graffiti showcase / foraging trail / location for film shows / astronomy / location for filming tv / films / adverts / historical location for photo-shoots / history – football / jungle gym – industrial revolution / meditation space / guided walks / play / guided walks prior to opening / location for theatre s

hundreds

/ markets – pop up – link with football / location for market mini-market / marketing opportunity / outdoor gym / organised – classical, pop, electronic / picnic spaces / organised bonfire space / organised fireworks / skateboarding park / nature trail / street vendors – antiques / new businesses under the arches & crafts / official route to park & ride / sculpture trails / rock the evening – or closed? / trim trail / rope slides / street vendors (beyond) / school trips / street vendors – clothes / outdoor cafe vendors – food & drink / project films on to other buildings / vendors – homewares / sponsor a brick scheme / walking route / sponsorship opportunity / walking route – work / venue for / walkway / words of wisdom as an installation / train spot / yoga classes / unusual plants / treasure hunts / wildlife hav



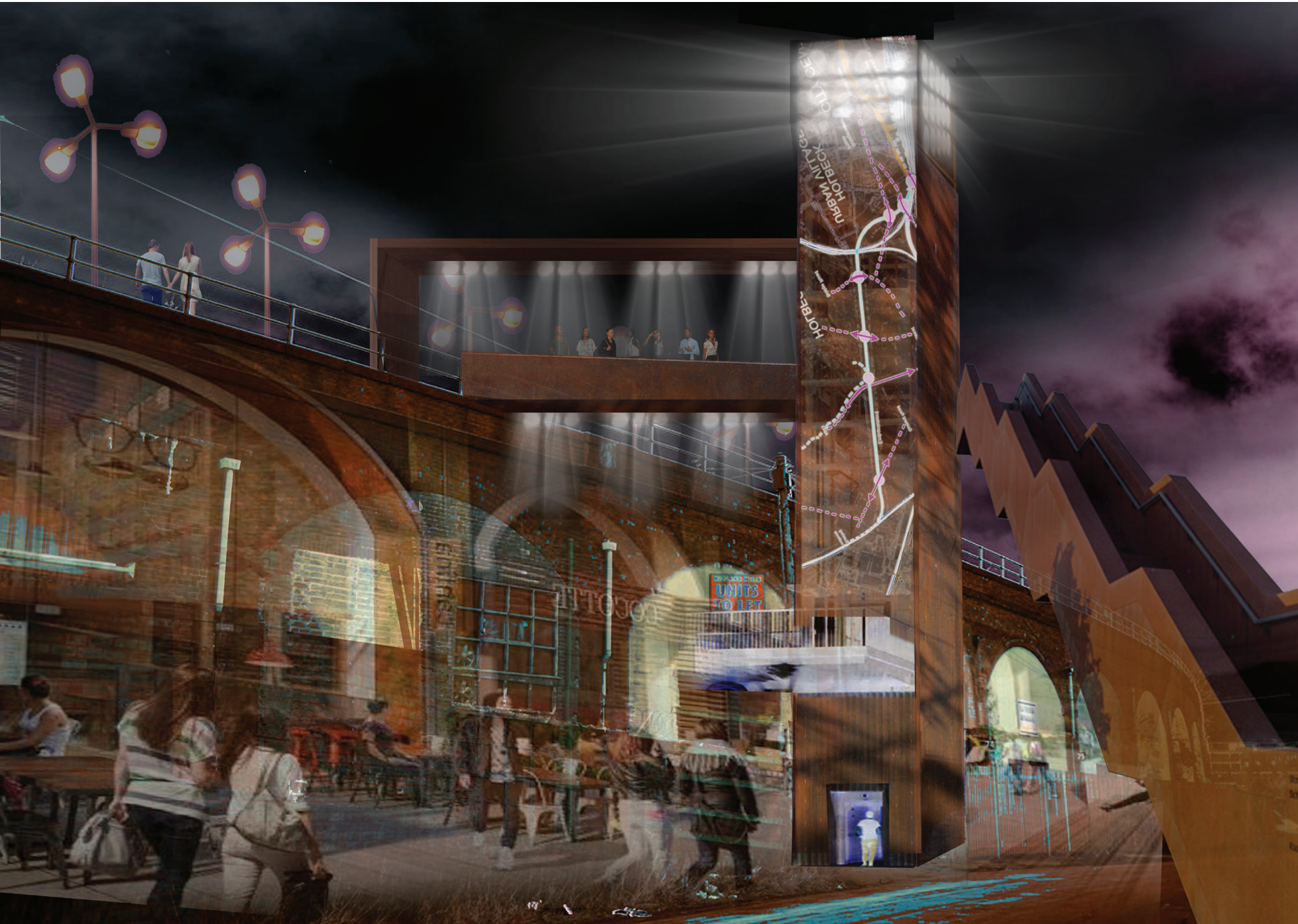
ing / a place to meet / a slide / annual heritage open day  
ented reality / BMX park / blue plaque link / BBQ spaces /  
play area / community meeting space / commercial shops  
/ education / training / community events e.g. Christmas  
/ edible plants / events – community / cycle superhighway  
e & volume / dog walking route / fitness trail / location for  
e keeping / fixed telescopes – stars / location for corporate  
es – views / location for fashion shows / food festivals /  
/ good seating / hang-out space for older children / guided  
ry – change in cities / jogging route / guided history tours /  
/ guided meditation / location for poetry readings / history  
/ location for silent disco events / history – local / natural  
shows / history – railways / nature reserve / heritage tours

# reds of ideas

ers to create, display & sell / nature trails / local history /  
rganised BBQs / proverbs as an installation / music venue  
nfires / public information site / nature information / play  
rails / play space for very young children / organised picnics  
ches / running route / Pokémon go / street vendors – arts  
k climbing venue / street vendors – books & vinyl / open in  
vendors – bric-a-brac / open space / views of the city (and  
cinema / walking route / school trips and activities / street  
gs / walking route – football / street food events / street  
oute – play / Tai Chi lessons / street vendors – memorabilia  
r performance art / street vendors – souvenirs / table tennis  
tting venue / travel route / access route / water features /  
ven / zip lines / venue for graffiti walls / venue for Light Night



Holbeck Viaduct Project



What could it look like?

Concept visuals by Edward Architecture explore potential ideas and themes for the space.





**“We want to transform  
Holbeck Viaduct into  
a vibrant community  
green space for  
everyone to enjoy.”**



# Finance and costs

**This section is primarily concerned with funding and the costs of developing and maintaining the viaduct.**

**As part of a pre-feasibility study, it is beyond the remit of this section to accurately depict and measure the costs of a potential development of the viaduct. This is because the parameters of such a development are not known in enough detail to provide an accurate costing. Instead, this section aims to answer whether developing and maintaining the viaduct is feasible or not from a costs and funding perspective.**

**This section presents that development and maintenance of the viaduct is likely to be feasible, because the costs of doing so need not be significant, and funding is likely to be available from a variety of sources. However, that is not to underplay the likelihood that securing sufficient funding to undertake a cost-effective project would be a significant undertaking.**

## **Costs to develop and maintain the viaduct need not be significant**

Symbolically, development of a railway viaduct is often compared to that of the New York High Line, which could be seen as the ‘gold standard’ of developments and perhaps the most popular, with over 20 million visitors at 2014 and counting.<sup>1</sup> However, as might be expected of the ‘gold standard’, the High Line could undoubtedly be described towards the ‘high-end’ of viaduct developments. The developers: “aimed high, spending money on publicity in Grand Central Station, hiring a Washington DC lobbyist, and – as they like to say themselves – throwing parties in style”.<sup>1</sup> Developing the High Line cost £170 million<sup>3</sup>, most of which

was provided by government.<sup>4</sup> Add to this a climate of public sector austerity, the High Line provides an unfair comparison for most other viaduct developments. Also, the High Line is over a third longer than the Holbeck Viaduct: 2.3km versus 1.7km respectively.

It therefore follows that any development and resulting maintenance of the Holbeck Viaduct could be achieved at a fraction of the cost of the development of the New York High Line, due to its shorter distance and with a far less extravagant specification being considered. Unlike the High Line, the viaduct development has been described as a “scaled down community-led initiative”.<sup>5</sup> A phased opening would reduce development costs

of viaduct development further, while also allowing time to pilot or test operating models and assess maintenance costs. This could be beneficial in ensuring a frugal project.

## **The main cost of the development would be to ensure access onto the viaduct**

Perhaps the main cost to develop the viaduct would be to ensure access onto the viaduct (including disabled access). This would be particularly problematic at the Leeds City Station end, as the viaduct ends onto railway track, so some form of bridge or walkway would be required to join most conveniently to the station in its present format. Alternatively, a cheaper workaround would be to affix a staircase



from this end, although the present station layout would mean a reasonable walk around the southern end of the station to actually enter it.

Other costs would include – but are far from limited to – lighting, surveillance, health and safety and insurance, disability access, and the cost to lease the top of the viaduct.

**A low-cost viaduct development would be feasible, assuming that the viaduct is no longer needed for rail use**

It is typically assumed of other viaduct developments assume that the viaduct is controlled in full by the developer. That is, either it is owned outright or leased (perhaps for a peppercorn rent) from the leaseholder. Due primarily that the commercial units within the archways of the viaduct are seen as economically viable, it is not proposed that the Holbeck Viaduct is purchased outright, nor that the commercial units beneath it are purchased and then leased (it would also be challenging to fundraise to such an extent that this would be possible). It would be more economically viable for a low-cost viaduct development to lease the top of the viaduct and access rights from the current leaseholder (assumed to be Network Rail), who would retain the rights to the commercial units in full.

It could only be reasonably assumed that such an arrangement would occur if Network Rail believed that the (top of) the viaduct need not be protected to meet future growth in rail demand. This can safely be assumed in the case of High Speed Rail 2 (HS2), where the route terminates east of the viaduct.<sup>6</sup>

For High Speed Rail 3 (HS3), the last Budget provided funding to develop plans by 2017.<sup>7</sup> Realistically, despite the viaduct not having carried rail transport for nearly fifty years, go-ahead for development of the viaduct is unlikely to continue until it is known whether the viaduct is affected or not by the plans for HS3. This might be delayed further due to HS3 falling down the list of governmental priorities given ‘Brexit’ and the change of Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister since the last Budget.

Nevertheless, without future rail use – which looks increasingly unlikely given the number of years the viaduct has been without it, and with no connection to a current railway line (the viaduct ends onto wasteland near Bracken Court) – the viaduct would otherwise continue

to remain a disused and potentially untapped asset for the community.

**It has been proven that the social costs of developing and maintaining a viaduct can be mitigated**

Whether the scheme is cost-effective to those funding it should not be the only cost consideration. Consideration should also be given to social and environmental costs from the development of the scheme, in the same way that social benefits should be considered alongside economic ones.

Perhaps the main environmental costs to consider should be from criminality and the potential for injury whilst on an elevated viaduct. Mitigation measures would need to be provided, including fencing and screening where necessary, and potentially restrictions of the use of the viaduct. For example, the New York High Line shuts between 10pm and 7am. However, such issues should not prevent the feasibility of the project, and similar mitigation measures have been provided on other viaduct projects, for example the Headstone Viaduct at Monsal Dale in Derbyshire. Mitigation measures would need to be proportionate to the economic and social benefit that developing the viaduct would be estimated to create (see the following section).

**A social cost could be that the viaduct inhibits the privacy of households close to the viaduct. However, again, this should not affect the feasibility of the project if suitable mitigation is provided. In reality, few homes are located close enough to the viaduct that privacy is a significant risk, and the viaduct is bordered by trees where homes are closest to it. It is unlikely that commercial premises will have similar considerations, with the viaduct instead potentially generating greater publicity for businesses close to the newly developed thoroughfare (notwithstanding that the potential for criminality of users would need to be mitigated).**

Other environmental costs for consideration may include – but are far from limited to – the effects of any development of the viaduct in terms of the local habitat, contamination and asbestos.

**Funding is likely to be available from a variety of sources**

‘Who pays’ to develop and maintain the viaduct is an important question.

The New York High Line and previous development plans for the viaduct relied on funding from the public sector. While such funding would of course be beneficial for any future development, there is also likely to be increased interest from private developers, due to the mutual benefits that developing the viaduct would provide (see the following section for more detail on such benefits). Funding was already achieved for an art installation (Living Wild) on a nearby viaduct beside Whitehall Road and Wellington Road, which shows that achieving funding from private investors for community-led initiatives in the local area is possible.<sup>8</sup>

There is also increased interest in the viaduct from the voluntary and community sector and volunteers, including the Holbeck Viaduct Project.<sup>9</sup> It is feasible that much of the resource (including labour and materials) for designing and developing the viaduct could be provided in-kind or by volunteers. It would also be expected that the project fundraise through, for example, sponsorship (for example, commercial sponsorship or local ‘sponsor a brick’ schemes), enhanced membership options, donations, grants schemes, crowdfunding or social impact bonds.

<sup>\*1</sup> High Line Fact Sheet. Friends of the High Line. Available here: [http://files.thehighline.org/pdf/high\\_line\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://files.thehighline.org/pdf/high_line_fact_sheet.pdf) <sup>\*2</sup> Banerji, R.: 2012. New York’s High Line: Why cities want parks in the sky. BBC World Service. Available here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19872874> <sup>\*3</sup> \$152 million (2011) for sections 1 and 2, plus \$35m (2014) for section 3, at today’s prices and exchange rate. Source: <http://www.nycdc.com/project/high-line> (costs), <http://inflation.stephenmorley.org/> (inflation calculator), [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk) (\$ to £ exchange rate). <sup>\*4</sup> 77% of funds (\$144m out of \$187m) were provided by the city, state and federal governments combined: <http://www.nycdc.com/project/high-line>. <sup>\*5</sup> Yorkshire Evening Post, 2014. Leeds skywalk pipedream is on way to being revived. Yorkshire Post Newspapers Ltd. Available here: <http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/leeds-skywalk-pipedream-is-on-way-to-being-revived-1-6424179> <sup>\*6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-plan-and-profile-maps-2016-woodlesford-to-hunslet-and-hunslet-to-leeds-station-hsl22-and-hsl31> <sup>\*7</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508193/HMT\\_Budget\\_2016\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508193/HMT_Budget_2016_Web_Accessible.pdf) <sup>\*8</sup> Yorkshire Evening Post, 2014. <sup>\*9</sup> <http://holbeckviaduct.org.uk/>



Holbeck Viaduct Project





# Demand and benefits

**This section considers the potential benefits of developing and maintaining the viaduct.**

**As part of a pre-feasibility study, it is beyond the remit of this section to accurately depict and measure the full benefits of a potential development of the viaduct. This is because the parameters of such a development are not known in enough detail to provide an accurate estimate. Instead, this section aims to answer whether developing and maintaining the viaduct is feasible or not, in terms of an overview of the benefits that are likely to accrue.**

**This section presents that development and maintenance of the viaduct is likely to be feasible, because it will lead to a net gain for society, by developing a disused resource into one that provides commercial and social opportunities. However, that is not to underplay that developing would be a significant undertaking and that substantial benefits may take some years to accrue.**

**It is recommended that a full Cost Benefit Analysis is undertaken as part of any feasibility study that follows this pre-feasibility study.**

## **Developing the viaduct can provide significant economic benefits**

As mentioned, although this section will not provide an accurate estimate of the economic benefits of developing the viaduct, it is entirely plausible that such a development would provide significant economic benefits. The increasing numbers of developments of viaducts and former railway lines suggests that there are benefits from turning a disused resource into an active one. For example, it has been calculated that the benefits

of the New York High Line in extra tax revenue alone was eight times its development cost over a 20-year period.<sup>10</sup> It was also found to provide an estimated \$2bn (£1.25bn) of new economic activity along the route, substantially over-achieving initial estimates.

‘Who benefits’ is as an important question as ‘who pays’. From the New York High Line, it was mentioned that: “Property developers have made far more money out of the High Line than its own creators”.<sup>11</sup> Knowing this, the viaduct

project could seek to partner with private developers, in the knowledge that it has been shown that a similar, community-led development has the potential to substantially increase their return, in what might be described as a socially responsible way. Development plans likely to be looked on more favourably if they help the community. Corporate and personal donations are likely to be possible for a development project part of an area that is seen as being ‘on the up’.



**Developing the viaduct will act as a multiplier for the regeneration of Leeds South Bank, making the South Bank a more attractive proposition for current and future businesses, developers and landowners**

Leeds South Bank is undergoing substantial redevelopment, as part of a wider plan to increase the size of Leeds City Centre by 50%. This is significant because the viaduct is not now a disused development in a neglected part of the city, but an asset within a wider, mixed-use development. The viaduct could improve transport connectivity (cycle and footpath) within the regeneration area and add to the vibrancy of the area, enhancing the attraction of the area to young professionals and increasing land and property prices. This so-called ‘multiplier effect’ (also described as a ‘halo effect’ or ‘tonic effect’) could increase the commercial attractiveness of the development and the economic return to investors, developers (including, for example, construction companies) and potential and current businesses.

**Links from the South Bank to and from the city centre will be essential for any regeneration to come close to reaching its potential**

Bringing the viaduct back into use and creating – in its simplest form – a practical and inspiring traffic-free pathway between communities would, on its own, bring significant benefit to the local community and city as a whole.

Developing the viaduct could help connect the city centre to and from Holbeck, Beeston Hill and Beeston – including connecting employees and commuters, businesses, customers, residents, tourists – and home and away supporters to Leeds United Football Club. For example, with no direct walking route from the station or city centre, supporters take buses or avoid going into the city centre altogether,<sup>12</sup> and in doing so avoid commercial opportunities. The viaduct could provide commercial opportunities in its own right (see below), reduce the journey time to the station and improve its attractiveness, in doing so providing economic (and social) benefits.

Developing the viaduct would ensure that any economic benefit from it is at least somewhat retained within south Leeds, by “link[ing] the residents of ‘Old Holbeck’ with new jobs in Holbeck Urban Village and the rest of the South Bank”,<sup>13</sup> improving the connectivity of an area of

the city described as an “island” around the M621 motorway and other major roads.<sup>14</sup> It would provide an interesting walk that showcases the city. Though there will be costs of developing the viaduct and mitigating costs and risks (see the preceding section of this report), the benefits are likely to be substantial. No alternative offers such a direct link.

**Developing the viaduct is a rare opportunity**

Not many cities have an opportunity to develop a viaduct in this way. However, some cities do – so it cannot be said that this is a unique project. This is a positive: it provides ample opportunity for this project to learn from the ideas, successes and challenges of other projects. A ‘twinning’ agreement could solidify the viaduct’s relationship with other developments, providing the viaduct and the city with international profile and perhaps foreign direct investment.

Though not exhaustive, a list of comparable projects involving developing a disused railway line or viaduct could include:

**Local**

- Whitehall Road, Leeds
- Great Northern Trail, Worth Valley near Keighley

**National**

- Liverpool Flyover
- Headstone Viaduct, Monsal Dale, Derbyshire
- Camden Highline, Central London
- Parkland Walk, North London
- Bishopsgate Goods Yard, Shoreditch, London

**International**

- Bloomingdale Trail, Chicago
- Promenade Plantée, Paris
- High Line, New York

Such a rare opportunity could provide a tourist destination akin to: “an exceptional opportunity to create a facility of national and international interest” and “an extraordinary gift to our city’s future”.<sup>15</sup> It could bring profile to the south of Leeds and significant media interest.

**Developing the viaduct would provide commercial opportunities in its own right**

The viaduct could host products and services, unlocking a valuable mixed-use

resource for the area (see Products and Services section of this report for further detail). These would add to the economic benefit from the development.

In addition, developing the viaduct could make the units below the viaduct, currently owned by Network Rail Property, more attractive. It is anticipated that the units could be rented more readily or for higher rent. In this sense, developing the viaduct is advantageous to Network Rail.

**Developing the viaduct would provide significant arts, culture and heritage opportunities**

As well as commercial benefit, developing the viaduct would provide a valuable resource for the community (see Products and Services section of this report for further detail). The viaduct lends itself to a number of potential uses related to the arts (for example, music and drama), the city’s cultural programme (for example, Light Night), wildlife, nature and gardening. These would lead to social opportunities, bringing families and the public together if seating and/or picnic tables were adopted, or social events held, for example. The viaduct would provide a valuable resource should Leeds be successful with its bid to become a European City of Culture in 2023.

As a former railway line and part of Leeds’ industrial heritage, it is likely that a developed viaduct would lead to significant interest from the heritage sector from stakeholders such as Historic England, Leeds Civic Trust (who could host tours of the viaduct) and heritage railway groups and enthusiasts.

As a transport route, the viaduct could provide health and environmental benefits, as a cycling route (potentially as part of the Cycle Superhighway), and encouraging potential users to walk into town rather than travelling by road. This would reduce pollution, improve air quality, free up parking space in the city centre and lead to health benefits. For example, the Land Trust promotes that “a brisk walk every day in a local green space can reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s by 25%”.<sup>16</sup> These social benefits should be considered in addition to economic benefits, to ascertain the true value of any development.

<sup>10</sup> Banerji, R.; 2012. “It seems that their estimate was too conservative. They now reckon that the value to the city in extra tax revenue over a 20-year period will be somewhere in the region of \$900m (£563m) - not bad for a project that cost \$112m (£70m)”. <sup>11</sup> Ibid. <sup>12</sup> Author’s personal experience! <sup>13</sup> <http://www.southleedslife.com/slideshow-walking-holbeck-highline/> <sup>14</sup> <http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/community-makes-plans-build-brighter-future-leeds-district-holbeck/local-action/article/1326567> <sup>15</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/09/arts/design/09highline-RO.html> <sup>16</sup> <http://thelandtrust.org.uk>



# make it happen

**This document and its supporting appendices were developed during 2016-17 by a group of local residents with an interest in the Holbeck Viaduct. We would very much welcome your support and challenge in taking this project forward. There are loads of ways to get involved: say hi via Facebook, follow us on Twitter or just drop us an email (see back cover for details).**



**For the latest news, information and additional appendices that support this document, visit:**

**Twitter: @HolbeckViaduct**

**Facebook: Holbeck Viaduct Project**

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**holbeckviaduct.org.uk**



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