# Yeovil’s £24 million refresh project seeks to revive town amid social challenges



As I walked through the streets of Yeovil earlier this week, I was struck by the contrasting sights of demolition and regeneration. An excavator tore through the remnants of the old Glover’s Walk shopping centre, a scene resembling a child's playtime dismantling of a sandcastle. Piles of rubble and a flurry of construction workers adorned the once-bustling location, signalling the ambitious beginnings of the £24 million Yeovil Refresh project, aimed at revitalising the town centre.

The newly pedestrianised Triangle area, pivotal to this regeneration initiative, offers a blend of artistic ambition and community focus. With an expansive amphitheatre-style setup, the space includes a water feature and a large LED screen designed to host public events and art installations. Mike Rigby from Somerset Council expressed optimism about the space, stating that it is intended to make Yeovil a "thriving place to live, work and visit." Such plans aim not only to enhance local amenities but also foster community engagement and encourage further investment.

Now, as construction proceeds, significant updates are underway. Plans to refresh Glovers Walk alongside improvements to pedestrian networks and road systems aim to attract residents and tourists alike, creating a more inviting atmosphere. However, the road to revitalisation is not without its bumps. Locals have voiced frustration about the protracted presence of construction barriers and the noise associated with ongoing works. Conversations with local residents revealed a sentiment of impatience—one person lamented that the scaffolding seemed to have been up "for too bloody long."

As Yeovil grapples with these changes, it also faces considerable challenges. The recent scrapping of the Number 11 bus service has left many community members strained, while increasing rates of homelessness have exacerbated social issues. The local hospital has found itself in hot water, with safety concerns leading to the temporary closure of its Special Care Baby Unit and halting inpatient maternity services. The Care Quality Commission had issued stark warnings earlier this year, highlighting an urgent need for improvements.

Crime rates further complicate the narrative, soaring to 68% above the regional average. Yet amidst these hurdles, a sliver of hope remains. Yeovil was recently lauded as Somerset’s most affordable property hotspot, presenting an opportunity for potential new residents and investors.

The Yeovil Refresh project not only strives to redefine the town’s landscape but also aims to address its underlying socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, the involvement of community organisations in developing plans for the Triangle has modelled a collaborative approach to urban renewal, with events planned throughout the summer to rekindle local interest and participation.

Looking ahead, the future remains uncertain yet filled with potential. According to Somerset Council, the redevelopment of Glover's Walk, supported by government funding from the Future High Streets Fund, includes provisions for mixed-use developments that will meld shopping and affordable housing. These changes, expected to be realised in phases over the coming years, could offer a new chapter for a town seeking revitalisation.

As work continues, all eyes will be on Yeovil—the outcome of the Yeovil Refresh initiative holds the promise of transforming not just its physical environment but also the community spirit that encapsulates this historic town. The challenges may seem daunting, but with sustained effort and community involvement, Yeovil could emerge from its current state a beacon of renewal and resilience.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 5
2. Paragraph 2
3. Paragraph 3
4. Paragraph 2
5. Paragraph 3
6. Paragraph 5
7. Paragraph 5

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2056474/uk-ghost-town-set-24m-revamp> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cednx0y6n92o> - The BBC News article discusses the unveiling of The Triangle's new entertainment space in Yeovil, Somerset, as part of the £24 million Yeovil Refresh regeneration project. The redevelopment includes an amphitheatre-style area, water feature, art installations, and a large screen. Mike Rigby from Somerset Council expressed hopes that the space would make Yeovil a 'thriving place to live, work and visit.' The project aims to bring people together and encourage investment in the town. The redevelopment features a raised stage with a large screen for live performances and art installations co-created with community groups during the Covid pandemic. The space is designed to be an inspiring, relaxing, and exciting area for the community. Other phases of the Yeovil Refresh programme include redeveloping Glovers Walk and improving road systems and walkways for all users. A programme of events is planned for The Triangle this summer to help bring people together and create a focal point for the town.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20mzr3j0evo> - This BBC News article reports on the demolition of Glover's Walk shopping centre in Yeovil as part of the £24 million Yeovil Refresh regeneration project. Somerset Council completed a deal to purchase the site from Martin Property Group, marking the final phase of the regeneration that began in 2019. The council plans to temporarily repurpose the land to 'add value' to the town while exploring longer-term options, including new shops and affordable housing. Mike Rigby, the council's lead member for economic development, planning, and assets, emphasized the importance of regenerating this part of Yeovil to build a more attractive town centre. The project is supported by £4.8 million in government funding from the Future High Streets Fund, which will be used to create mixed-use developments in Middle Street, Wyndham Street, and Glover's Walk.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz42g8yjdpwo> - The BBC News article announces plans to install a 16ft (5m) wide LED screen in Yeovil's town centre as part of the Yeovil Refresh regeneration programme. The screen will be permanently installed in a new amphitheatre currently being constructed in The Triangle area. Somerset Council stated that the screen would display national events like major sporting moments and royal occasions, as well as advertisements. The planning application for the screen was unanimously approved by Somerset Councillors, with installation scheduled for spring 2024. The screen will operate between 07:00 and 22:00 seven days a week and will also advertise local events and community information.
5. <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/yeovil-refresh-glovers-walk-demolition-gets-underway/> - This Somerset Council news release details the commencement of demolition work on Glover's Walk as part of the Yeovil Refresh regeneration scheme. The demolition marks a significant milestone in the transformation of Yeovil's town centre. The site was acquired by Somerset Council in September 2024 using government funding from the Future High Street Fund. The long-term plan is to redevelop the 2.2-acre site for mixed-use purposes, including a new transport interchange. During the demolition process, the town's bus station will remain operational, with a passenger waiting room and toilets reinstated. The estimated timeframe for the completed redevelopment is 3 to 5 years, with plans to work in partnership with the local community and groups like Love Yeovil and Yeovil Art Space to gather views and ideas about the site's future development.
6. <https://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/23801600.yeovil-refresh-next-stage-confirmed-somerset-council/> - The Somerset County Gazette article reports on the next phase of the Yeovil Refresh regeneration programme, focusing on improvements to Wyndham Street and other roads at the eastern end of Yeovil's town centre. The programme aims to revitalize the town centre by enhancing the public realm and local transport, encouraging new development. The work includes improving local drainage to reduce flood risk, aligning kerbs to meet national highway standards, and resurfacing key roads and footpaths to make them safer for vehicles and pedestrians. The project is partially funded by the government's Future High Streets Fund and has experienced delays, leading residents to claim the town centre looks like a 'bomb site.'
7. <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/yeovil-refresh/public-realm/> - This page on the Somerset Council website provides information about the public realm enhancements in Yeovil town centre as part of the Yeovil Refresh programme. The enhancements aim to transform areas where residents, businesses, and visitors move and congregate, creating a more attractive and navigable space for all. Six areas of the town centre are set to receive changes, including Westminster Street, The Borough, upper Middle Street (including Wine Street), Middle Street (East), Middle Street (West), and The Triangle. The work is scheduled to start in September 2021 and is expected to be completed by the end of Summer 2024. The designs focus on reducing clutter and making the areas more appealing for people to visit, with The Triangle being a central focal point for visitors to congregate and enjoy activities.