

## **‘Cultural Quarter’ Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee 29<sup>th</sup> January 2009**

### **‘Cultural Quarter’– Interim Report**

#### **Background**

1. This topic was originally registered in early 2008 by Councillor Hogg to examine the ‘Vision’ developed in 2007 for a Cultural Quarter for York, linking the city centre with development sites in York North West. He suggested using the 2007 ‘Vision’ document to explore the relationship between the six areas of the quarter (area 1 to include the Railway Station), including pedestrian and vehicular movement, design, open spaces, a river crossing, performance areas, lighting, landscaping, cultural production, promotion and public art.
2. The aim of the vision is to generate substantially more external funding than that which is currently being achieved through an ad-hoc approach. The ‘Vision’ recognises that getting the link between the city centre and York North West right, will support and guide future city centre development.
3. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Scrutiny Management Committee recognised certain key objectives and the following remit was agreed:

#### **Aim**

4. To contribute towards achieving a long-term direction for the area between the National Railway Museum (NRM), York Railway Station and the Minster, and to consider any positive and/or adverse effects on the city in doing so.

#### **Objectives**

- i. To understand the Council’s strategic approach, and that of its key partners, to the cultural design for the area.
- ii. To contribute to a business plan for achieving the required funding for developing the area into a ‘Cultural Quarter’.
- iii. To develop and establish some key principles, for guiding a collaborative approach to cultural development in the future, including connectivity to other areas of the city.

## **Consultation**

5. This review, has so far, been carried out in consultation with the following:
  - Head of Arts & Culture at City of York Council
  - External Relations Manager at Visit York
  - The Chief Executive & the Director of Finance and Business Development at the York Museums Trust
  - Officers and Elected Members at Gateshead Council
  - Officers at Newcastle City Council
  - York Theatre Royal
  - Head of Libraries & Heritage – City of York Council
  - Representatives of the National Railway Museum
  - Dean of York Minster
  - Representatives of York St John University
  - Representative of Rushbond PLC
  - Various Officers in City Strategy Directorate at City of York Council
  - Members of the public at a public drop in session held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008
  - Public Affairs & Stakeholder Manager and the Head of Property at National Express

## **Information Gathered**

6. At the last formal meeting on 16 December 2008 Members had discussions in relation to:

### City Centre Area Action Plan & the Boundary of the Cultural Quarter

7. Officers attended the meeting and provided details on how the proposed Cultural Quarter sat within the Local Development Framework (LDF) and with the City Centre Area Action Plan (CCAAP). They informed Members that extensive consultations had taken place regarding the CCAAP and 1700 comments had been received. A full report regarding this consultation was due to be presented to the LDF Working Group in January 2009. Further information regarding the above and a summary of the comments received is attached at Annex 1 to the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2008.
8. In response to the Officers' information Members agreed that the comments received largely mirrored those that were received at the public drop in session held on 4th November 2008.

## **Issues Arising**

9. The following issues were highlighted in discussions relating to the above:
  - It would be necessary for a robust evidence base to be produced for the Cultural Quarter in order that it could be included as an Action Area. This would need to set out the proposed projects, delivery partners and funding

sources. If this were to be incorporated into the next stage of the CCAAP and subject to public consultation then the evidence would need to be produced by Summer 2009.

- It was important to embed the objectives for the Cultural Quarter into both the CCAAP and the York Northwest Area Action Plan. This would ensure that any proposals were co-ordinated with the wider area.
- Although the boundary of the Cultural Quarter could cover an area of more than on Area Action Plan, the Government Office has advised that Action Plan boundaries could not themselves overlap.
- There was a need to define specific areas of the city for the purposes of economic development, whilst in terms of cultural provision; there was a need to be as inclusive as possible. The institutions and organisations based outside of the proposed boundary would be part of the wider cultural agenda and would contribute to activities and events within the Cultural Quarter and benefit from its success.
- It was important to have a model that was inclusive and non-competitive and one in which all organisations were encouraged to offer cultural contributions. There must be benefits to citizens in all parts of the city as well as to visitors to the area. Sir Ron Cooke had produced such a model and this was attached as Annex 2 to the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2008.

### Naming & Branding

10. Discussions were had regarding the term 'Cultural Quarter' and how some residents had seen the term as elitist and divisive. This had resulted in some negative comments being made about the proposals for the Cultural Quarter. Suggestions for an alternative name had been put forward and were listed as part of the findings from the public drop in session (Annex A to the report presented to the Committee on 16 December 2008).

### **Issues arising**

- 'Cultural Quarter' was a term recognised by Government and could act as a trigger in accessing funding streams.
- As the proposals evolved it was likely that a more appropriate name would be adopted.

### Role of City of York Council in the Process of Developing a Cultural Quarter

11. Discussions were had regarding the role York Council should play in the development of a Cultural Quarter.

### **Issues arising**

- The Council would need to provide leadership and encouragement
- The Council would need to support organisations seeking to access funding by removing barriers to investment
- The Council would need to ensure that a pedestrian link across the river was in place

- The Council would need to ensure that Council owned buildings within the area, for example the library, contributed to the success of the Cultural Quarter

### Transport & Highways

12. Officers attended the meeting and provided information on the City Centre Transport Masterplan Workshop, which had been held on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008. (The notes of this meeting are attached at Annex 3 to the minutes of the Cultural Quarter meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008.)
13. The Transport Planning Unit would be undertaking a review which would consider the findings of a number of projects including the Footstreets Review, Cycling City Strategy, Coach Parking Strategy, various improvements to main routes into the city and an audit of the 'Gateway Streets' to assess where road space could be reallocated to promote sustainable travel choices and improve the experience of visiting and navigating the city. The Cultural Quarter (incorporating St Leonard's Place and Leeman Road) was one of the five areas that would be investigated for accessibility. It was expected that this review would be completed in the summer of 2009.

### **Issues arising**

- The key issue for the Area Action Plan in relation to the Cultural Quarter was the need to co-ordinate the public realm masterplanning of the wider city centre with the proposals for the public realm within the boundaries of the Cultural Quarter.
- Accessibility was a key factor in the success of the Cultural Quarter.
- The current uncertainty regarding transport issues, especially in the Leeman Road area, was causing anxiety for some residents.

### St Leonard's Hospital Site & Area Behind the Art Gallery

14. Discussions took place regarding possible improvements to the St Leonard's Hospital site and the area behind the Art Gallery.

### **Issues arising**

- Suggestions for using these areas included a sculpture park and an information centre.
- The areas were under-utilised at the moment.
- The public were often deterred from visiting them because of problems with anti-social behaviour.
- Further consideration needed to be given as to ways of preserving the history of this area for future generations whilst encouraging visitors to benefit from what it had to offer.

## Other

15. A representative of the already established Minster Quarter came to the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> December and addressed Members. He gave details of the launch of the Minster Quarter and how stakeholders representing attractions in the area, businesses and the retail sector were working together. This was linked to the CCAAP and was a new approach to urban governance.
16. A representative of York St John University attended to further urge Members to include their establishment within the boundaries of the proposed Cultural Quarter.
17. A representative of the Arts Barge Project attended to inform Members that they were intending to provide a floating cultural centre on the River Ouse. Members welcomed this project but noted that this project would not be within the boundaries of the Cultural Quarter as they were presently drawn.
18. In relation to the document 'York: A Vision for Tourism' which was circulated at the meeting Members noted that the ambition to develop York as a leading European cultural centre was closely linked to the vision for a Cultural Quarter within the city.

## **Issues arising**

- Whilst there was an overlap between the Minster Quarter and the Cultural Quarter it was not in any way detrimental as partnership working was crucial to the success of both the Minster Quarter and the proposed Cultural Quarter.

## **Information Gathered Outside of the Formal Meeting**

19. In an e-mail discussion between Members that took place after the last formal meeting it was agreed that it would be useful to meet with National Express to discuss their future plans for York Railway Station. A main principle of the Cultural Quarter is to increase accessibility for foot traffic within the area and to that effect it had been presumed that access through the station would remain the same as it is now or be improved. It has, however, recently been announced that National Express intend to 'gate' the station buildings as part of their franchise commitment.
20. Members, therefore, met with National Express informally on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2009 to discuss their future plans for the station. Members asked whether public access across the footbridge to the NRM would still be possible once gates had been installed. National Express confirmed that this route would be for ticket holding rail passengers only and would therefore, no longer be a public thoroughfare.
21. Discussions were also had regarding the possibility of a new bridge across the river. National Express were keen to discuss the possibilities of this further whilst acknowledging that this was still very much in its early stages. The possibility of building a bridge from the end of platform 4 across the river

was discussed as the land at this point was at the same level on both sides of the river. National Express were keen to be involved in any further discussions regarding these ambitions.

## Other

22. One further consultation form had been received in relation to the public consultation event. The points from this had been added into the collated responses presented in Annex A to the interim report to the Committee dated 16 December 2008. It was expected that this would be produced in evidence and form part of the Committee's final report.

23. A letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008 had been received from the Yorkshire Gardens Trust. The letter encourages the Committee to consider a horticultural feature within the Museum Gardens. Ideas for this feature included glasshouses and a facility to stage temporary exhibitions connected to garden history and botanical art. The Chair agreed to respond to this letter.

## Further Information Requested

24. At a meeting of the Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008 Members requested that Officers report back with an Executive Summary of the Business Plan. This is attached at Annex A to this report.

25. At the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008 Members requested that they receive more information in relation to the transport proposals for the York Northwest site. To that effect, Sue Houghton, Tony Clarke and Ruth Egan from the City Strategy Directorate at York Council have agreed to attend the meeting to answer any questions Members might have.

## Timetable

26. The timetable for the remainder of the review is therefore as follows:

Date	Event
29.01.2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To receive an Executive Summary of the Draft Business Plan</li><li>• To receive further information regarding the transport proposals for the York Northwest site</li><li>• To formulate some draft recommendations for inclusion in the draft final report.</li></ul>
18.02.2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To consider the draft final report</li></ul>

## Options

27. Having regard to the aims and objectives of this topic remit, and having considered the information provided in this report Members may choose to:
- i. Agree the timetable as set out in paragraph 26 of this report
  - ii. Consider whether they require further information and if not to,
  - iii. Consider formulating some recommendations for inclusion in the draft final report.

## Implications

28. **Human Resources** – The Head of Arts & Culture is already leading on this within her service and has indicated that this review would only incur minimal additional administrative work, which could be retained within her team.
29. **Legal** – There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations within this report.
30. **Financial** – There are minimal funds allocated from within the scrutiny budget for research relating to ongoing reviews, therefore there are no financial implications associated with the recommendations within this report.
31. There are no Equalities, Property, Crime & Disorder, or other implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

## Corporate Strategy – Priorities & Direction

32. This review related to the following corporate priority for improvement of this Council:
- ‘Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the City’s streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces.’

## Risk Management

33. In compliance with the Council’s risk management strategy, there are no known risks associated with the recommendations of this report other than the focus of the review and the progress of the Scrutiny work plan would be adversely affected if the review did not keep within the agreed timescale.

## Recommendation

34. It is recommended that Members consider:
- i. Approving the timetable as set out in paragraph 26 of this report
  - ii. Formulating some draft recommendations for inclusion in the draft final report.

Reason: To ensure the progression of this review and compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

**Contact Details**

**Author:**

Tracy Wallis  
Scrutiny Officer  
Scrutiny Services  
Tel: 01904 551714

**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**

Quentin Baker  
Head of Civic, Legal & Democratic Services  
Tel No: 01904 551004

**Interim  
Approved**

**Report**

**Date** 15-01-09

**Specialist Implications Officers**

**Wards Affected:** Guildhall, Holgate & Micklegate

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:**

**Annexes**

**Annex A** – Executive Summary of the Business Plan