

## **CULTURAL QUARTER (SCRUTINY SUMMARY)**

### **Where is the Cultural Quarter?**

As it is currently proposed the Cultural Quarter runs from the National Railway Museum and Railway Station end of the York North West development area, the Memorial Gardens, the riverside walks, across the river Ouse, through Museum Gardens (incorporating the Yorkshire Museums, Kings Manor, the Library, the Roman Multangular Tower, St Mary's Abbey, St Leonard's Hospital, the Hospitium and Observatory), into Exhibition Square (incorporating the York Art Gallery, City Archives and the Theatre Royal) Duncombe Place, St Leonard's Place and running up to the Minster and its environs, including Deans Park.

The term 'Cultural Quarter' is borrowed from European urban planning terminology and is used to denote an urban zone distinguished by a number of related and located cultural institutions.

### **What are the distinctive features of the Cultural Quarter for York?**

- It forms a coherent area including York's two most visited visitor attractions (the NRM and the Minster) along with four other destinations among the city's leading cultural destinations – York Art Gallery, Yorkshire Museum, City Library and Theatre Royal.
- Within the city centre it includes the largest area of green open space covering the riverbank walks, Memorial Gardens, Museum Gardens and Deans Park, and the proposed green area for the York Northwest site
- The area is a geographically a compact area which encompass a scheduled ancient monument site and an especially high number of Grade 1 and 2\* listed buildings
- The area forms a clear opportunity to link the key development area of York Northwest with the city centre over the next few years. The Cultural Quarter creates a direct link to this major 21<sup>st</sup> century development area and the historic city centre.
- Exhibition Square axis has the potential for a large civic outdoor performance space
- St Leonard's Place - high quality city centre private retail, hotel and leisure redevelopment.
- That albeit compact, there is a perception that the cultural attractions are at some distance from each other and could be better connected

### **What are the opportunities?**

Many of the businesses and organisations in the area are producing significant investment plans at the moment but without a co-ordinated approach they run the risk of being seen as competitive plans rather than collaborative. This is especially significant when it comes to funding applications. Given the level of ambition and leadership which is being demonstrated by these organisations, there is value in working with them on initiatives that will improve connectivity and the public realm within the Cultural Quarter – and from the Cultural Quarter to the rest of the city centre, and to the York Northwest development area behind the station. We would also aim to foster a hub of creativity and cross working of cultural production that will have benefits for the cultural life of the whole city and region.

The outcomes of collective level of investment by all the key stakeholders in this area of the will include:

- Refreshing the image of York and building its cultural profile nationally and internationally
- Stimulating a pride of place for workers, residents, businesses and visitors

- Building new confidence in the whole of the cultural offer for both residents and visitors in the City
- Developing access and connectivity to the green spaces and cultural institutions in the city through a new network of green leisure routes and pathways
- Improving our understanding of the history of the city through improved interpretation and access
- Improving the way that the city looks and feels through investment in high quality design elements within the public spaces and street environment
- Contributing to a refreshed tourism offer through investment in and upgrading of current cultural facilities
- Building a partnership between key stakeholders that will see collaborations and cross working on shows, events, exhibitions and education work
- Contributing to a reduction in health inequalities by encouraging walking and cycling within the city centre
- Encouraging inward investment in a phased and collaborative programme
- Provision of new retail, leisure facilities and hotel space in the city centre
- Promoting York as a desirable place to live work and visit.

#### **Other benefits:**

Cultural/social: social history/heritage (archive services are proposed to remain in this area), green space, improving routes to, from and through for pedestrians and cyclists. Enhanced learning about the city and its history through interpretation

Economic: jobs can be created through the various investments, especially the support of the city's evening economy and events opportunities

Tourism: opportunities to expand York's visitor offer (NB also the new Visitor Information Centre at Museum Street will be in a gateway location to the Cultural Quarter)

Educational: Both Universities have a city centre presence and partnerships that encourage creative cultural product and employment opportunities. Partnership working on developing learning outcomes for schools to contribute to cultural entitlement for all children.

#### **Suggestions on how to get the most from the Cultural Quarter?**

- Commission a Design Masterplan for the public realm (e.g. The River, Riverside footpaths, Other footpaths throughout the area, The Memorial Gardens, Roads (e.g. St Leonard's Place, Museum Street, Leeman Road), The City Walls, Exhibition Square, Duncombe Place, Street furniture – lighting, signs, litterbins, general services.
- Consider opportunities for a new pedestrian/ cycle crossing of the Ouse as part of the York Northwest development plans
- Specifically look at the open space, riverfronts etc as opportunities for events, festivals etc and link this work closely to the transport plans and city centre area action plans for the city
- Commission an in depth Business Feasibility Plan required for the agreed Cultural Quarter area.
- Coordinate all the individual plans and ambitions to create a Master plan for the area

## ANNEX – THE PRINCIPAL PROPOSALS

This is a very short summary for the main proposed projects. Some of which (the Hospitium redevelopment, the Minster East front works) have already started, most of which depend on external funding bids to various bodies and council support for the suggestions above.

Development	Main features
York Minster	Improved access to South Transept – piazza – ticket operation relocated to shops in Minster Gates – improvements to disabled access (e.g. lift to Undercroft) – continuing restoration of stone/glass at East front window
Kings Manor	Discussions about the lane next to the Kings Manor being open more widely for access top/from Museum Gardens. Security implications are being explored
YMT – Art Gallery	Expand the art gallery – create a mezzanine gallery above the existing main gallery, extend gallery into the Gardens at the rear, Exhibition Square as event space
York Theatre Royal	Possible connecting building between the Theatre and De Grey House (where Theatre intend to do a lot more). De Grey Rooms will be refurbished, foyer to be enlarged, café bar area could be moved forward – even moved onto the pavement
Rushbond (1-9 St Leonard's Place)	Mixed use development envisaged, high quality luxury hotel, restaurant, retail and office space and residential
York Central Library	Will be transformed into an Explore Centre. Creation of a suite of learning rooms, new café, possible relocation of the Archives into the Library, possible additional wing upstairs
YMT – St Mary's Abbey Precinct	4 phases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitium (done)</li> <li>• Yorkshire Museum (major refurb – new galleries, and audio visual presentation on the History of York in the Tempest Anderson Hall)</li> <li>• Museum Gardens – gardens manager appointed – new planting, events programme, getting more volunteers, capital works on new pathways, routes and green spaces</li> <li>• Art gallery</li> </ul>
National Railway Museum	First phase redevelopment of the Great Hall New signature entrance building Public plaza (NB pedestrianise Leeman Road) High quality eating and shopping Links to the centre of York across the river Business development Hotel/conference facilities Parkland/green spaces
St John's University	£Mns Investment in arts/creative media – Performance activities Postgrad/Business incubation space Development of many courses with a cultural/tourism slant (e.g. Tourism Management) Building works will include digital technologies a Design and technology Building etc
The new Visitor Information Centre	Redevelopment of corner of Blake Street as a gateway to the project