
MEETING	GUILDHALL WARD COMMITTEE
DATE	27 NOVEMBER 2025
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS CLARKE, MELLY AND MERRETT
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS

1. DROP-IN 6:30PM

2. FORMAL MEETING START: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS 7PM

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Tony Clarke who welcomed everyone and set out the housekeeping rules and reminded residents that the meeting was non-political.

Apologies

Few residents have emailed their apologies to us prior to the meeting.

3. GUILDHALL PLANNING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT AND ELECTION 7:05PM

David Chatfield, acting Clerk of the Guildhall Planning Panel (GPP) spoke about how he joined the GPP at a Ward Committee meeting few years ago. He was new to York at the time and found the opportunity interesting. The existing GPP members are: Win Derbyshire (Clerk), David Chatfield, Mary Pringle, June Tranmer, Sarah Daniel, Jenny Howell, Charlette Shiel-Small, Ann Petherick and Sarah Friar. David stated that new members are always welcome and that a good opportunity to experience work of the GPP would be by attending one of their meetings. The GPP meets via video conferencing app for couple hours every three weeks. Every six months members get together in person. No qualifications in planning are required to become a member of the GPP. There are two membership criteria: being a resident of, or working in the Guildhall ward. The GPP can influence the planning process and heritage of Guildhall ward by putting in interested residents' views. Over the years the GPP has influenced planning decisions by looking at things from residents' perspectives. As a body recognised by the City of York Council (CYC) more weight is applied to their comments than those from individuals directly. The GPP has often expressed views on shop fronts, shop signage, air conditioner locations (noise to residents), all of which are relevant to residents. The GPP comments on the details of a particular planning application can make so

much difference to local people, whether it be the handling of trees, the way the building addresses a street, the screening of bins, location of bike stores and many other details.

The GPP reviews approximately 30 planning applications a month which amounts to 13% of City of York's planning applications.

Issues identified by the GPP are:

- Enforcement of Planning Process violations – credibility of the planning system.
- Short Term Holiday Lets (STHL)– is the current process controlling the number of short term lets effective? Are there density issues?
- Student housing – is there an independent report demonstrating the need for further investment in student housing and are the provisions for convertibility to residential use practical.
- Tree policies – encourage replacement (help to meet CYC tree target).
- Change of categories - should there be a time limit and restrictions on density of HMOs etc.?
- Climate Change Adaptation – should the planning application process be used to encourage adaptation for climate change, such as tree replacement or offsets, enforceable energy standards etc. ?

The GPP would welcome an opportunity to have a training/discussion session with the CYC Planning Department.

The GPP email address guildhallplanningpanel@gmail.com was provided for anyone wishing to contact about joining the group, or regarding planning application issue.

Four of the existing members of the GPP present at the meeting were happy and willing to continue being involved for another year and the other five members have given a verbal assent to being involved prior to the meeting. The Ward Committee confirmed continuance of the existing GPP members over the next year.

4. WALMGATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 7:15PM

Regeneration proposals

Lisa Otter, Housing Development Manager outlined the proposal to build 36 affordable homes on the former Willow House site and imminent Planning Application submission. It is a very sensitive site, right next to the Walmgate Barr and along city walls. The project team are keen to improve the built environment for residents in the wider area of Walmgate and approval was obtained to undertake a small piece of work together with the community to create a series of Walmgate Improvement Proposals. These proposals are designed to highlight the needs for the area, identify projects that have local support and inform the basis of future funding bids. Over the last few years the project team have been speaking and working with hundreds of people who live, work and volunteer in the Walmgate area. From the start the team has worked with the York Archaeology to enable

the use of the Willow House grounds to host a range of public heritage projects, such as the Archaeology on Prescription. Willow House and location of the new housing development is indicated in red on the attached slide show. The blue area is the South Walmgate boundary that the project team have been using to draft the improvement proposals. The following 13 possible projects have been defined:

- Willow House development of 36 new Passivhaus homes with very low fuel bills secured by design, enhanced accessibility and an emphasis on age friendliness.
- Improvements to the public area in front of the shops and development of a retail provision strategy that best serves the local community.
- Hope Street improvements such as resurfacing, pocket park areas, trees and rain gardens, bike storage and benches to increase both accessibility and amenity.
- Shared gardens enhancement such as installation of raised beds, garden storage, water butts, play features etc. encouraging more ownership of those spaces by residents. A stewardship scheme has been suggested by some residents to enable taking forward general onward maintenance and growing.
- Securing areas and reducing thorough routes to reduce crime and ASB and help make the shared gardens concept successful.
- Albert Street and the garage area redesign to address the issues with crime and ASB and provide new street frontage with infill housing. This project is reasonably large and would involve multiple stakeholders, as it would be built in close proximity to neighbouring residents.
- Infill development sites which would be developed by the CYC Housing or sold for infill housing to private developers. Capital generated from sale of land would be reinvested in the area.
- Retrofit strategy identifying housing stock in Walmgate in most need of investment. Flats in Walmgate often aren't the easiest structures to retrofit because there is some complexity around leaseholders and the provision of outhouses which are often attached to the main building, however residents are keen to increase the thermal performance of their homes especially where their ground floor flats are single skin, rather than cavity wall.
- Creation of a heritage trail to commemorate areas of historical interest throughout Walmgate.
- Sustainable travel infrastructure such as bicycle storage, EV chargers and car club spaces.
- Amenity planting and play features incorporating new trees and rain gardens for sustainable surface drainage.
- Privacy planting to give residents more of a buffer out to the street.

- Rampart planting for more biodiversity and enhanced visual amenity along the city walls.

An art-based regeneration project called Swarmgate will be delivered by the University of York. The project will launch on 11th of December and bee related installations will start appearing along Walmgate.

The project team are seeking further comments and feedback on the above proposals before the final Walmgate Improvement Proposals document is produced. Funding streams to take delivery of the priority projects forward are being explored, i.e. potential use of the internal Neighbourhood Improvement Programme, external sponsorship and other sources outside the CYC.

York Walls in Bloom

Liam Dennis, Ancient Monuments Manager spoke about the project to introduce native wildflower species along city wall ramparts to improve biodiversity and visual aesthetics. The location on Station Rise was most impactful, with wildflowers in full bloom between June and July this year. Manual scything is taking place currently to remove arisings and nutrients from site. Wildflower planting was initiated next to the Red Tower. This location required addition of low fertility soil, which was transported onto the site before planting. Friends of York Walls have been working with Natural England to test areas of planting along the ramparts to gently improve biodiversity along city walls. It is planned to expand wildflower planting to other locations along the city wall ramparts over the next year. The aim is to strike a balance between tall grasses and addition of wildflowers for better biodiversity, pollinator friendly habitat creation and visual amenity enhancements. The project is being well received by residents and local opinion on how city walls and ramparts are managed and maintained is very important to us. Residents are welcome to get in touch either with Liam, or the Friends of York Walls to explore ways how they could get involved.

At this point Cllr Clarke invited questions in respect of the project.

Q – Tall grass along the Walmgate section of city wall ramparts is not cut very often and you seem to be concentrating on the area more popular with tourists. Why is that?

A- Keeping the grass tall helps to maintain stability of the city wall ramparts, however we are looking at adding some native wildflower species to the Walmgate section.

A comment was made that city wall ramparts would look better with more flowers on as opposed to tall grass.

Liam welcomed the comment and explained that a balance needs to be maintained and the way that ramparts were maintained previously must be taken into consideration. Some sections of the ground will have high levels of nutrients, which are not good conditions for wildflowers. At Station Rise a top layer of turf had to be removed to reduce nutrients levels prior to wildflower planting. Liam invited suggestions for areas of city wall ramparts that could be improved.

Q – Long grass contributes to increase in ASB, as people tend to drop litter in long grass. It can also act as a buffer and a hiding place for drug users.

A – Liam welcomed the comment and asked for details of any hot spots that could be investigated.

Q – Is there a timescale for the rampart planting along the Walmgate section mentioned during the previous presentation?

A – An area by the Red Tower has been planted with wildflowers already and will flower next year. The Regeneration proposals are conceptual at this stage.

Q – It would be nice to see Walmgate higher up on the priority list.

A – We are looking at locations for next stages of wildflower planting and will take your comments on board. Station Rise and Red Tower were selected to test the concept. The long-term vision is to introduce wildflowers along the entire 2 miles stretch of city wall ramparts.

Neighbourhood Caretakers

Michal Czekajlo, Community Officer and Cllr Clarke spoke about the new CYC service created with the aim to enhance and tidy up parts of public spaces and adopted land that are not on a regular maintenance schedule. York was split into four areas and Guildhall ward is within the Central area alongside Clifton, Holgate and Micklegate wards. Regular walkabouts take place in each of the four areas to identify tasks for the Neighbourhood Caretakers team. Following the walkabout the team will spend a week worth of time to undertake work such as clearing moss from communal drying areas, trim vegetation overhanging onto a public footpath, remove weeds along a snicket, clear up a back alley, or prepare space for a community edible growing garden. The attached slideshow was used to show some before and after photos of tasks completed by the team following the recent walkabout around Walmgate. The next walkabout in Guildhall ward is scheduled for early March 2026.

Q – What is the planned maintenance schedule and how do we know there is no duplication?

A – During the walkabout we are accompanied by a colleague from the CYC Public Realm team who would advise on any jobs that would fall under the regular maintenance.

Cllr Melly added that Guildhall ward is a large area, and we work with the Neighbourhood Caretakers team to cover the whole ward. In terms of the regular maintenance schedule it can be very weather dependant, therefore difficult to share.

Q – There are a lot of overgrown hedges obstructing pavements. Can that be addressed?

A – Yes, it is part of the initiative to cover matters such as vegetation obstructing pavements.

Q – I collect leaves outside my house and along the street as nobody else does that. I don't feel that I should be doing that.

A – We thank you for your efforts. Neighbourhood Caretakers initiative is very new, and the aim is to get on top of things that have not been done in a long time due to previous savings. Community support is crucial for the initiative to flourish. A great model that could potentially be emulated in Walmgate is the Groves Community Association approach where community volunteers meet up for action days. We can support community volunteers with provision of litter picking equipment, bags and disposal of litter. Please do let us know if you'd like to be involved.

At this point Cllr Clarke invited everyone to break into four groups to discuss proposals and projects that have been presented and how they resonate with everyone.

Matters discussed and comments from group discussions.

- Details on the height of 36 new homes proposed for the Willow House would be useful. *The new buildings will be of up to two floors high and matching the surrounding area.*
- A concern was raised about impact of the building works on adjoining properties and risk of subsidence. *Although some piling work during construction of the foundations may be required, we understand that building works will not affect adjoining properties.*
- What other things could be done to make the area a nice place to live? There is lack of amenity space. *Introduction of play facilities such as small slides, climbing boulder, or a tree house will form part of the development, as well as addition of raised beds.*
- Will there be any communal space within the new development available for hire, or to run activities such as a youth club? *Inclusion of a community space facility was featured within the initial plans; however it was subsequently withdrawn due to costs.* Could a structure such as a portable cabin be placed to provide this additional facility, or one of the locations proposed for infill housing be dedicated towards a community facility?

Space 109 used to be a great community facility before it closed. St Denys Church Hall space is now closed? Red Tower is in the

vicinity but is small and upstairs is not accessible. Currently, the Hungate Reading Café is the closest facility that could be used as a community venue. An alternative community facility is the St Lawrence Church Hall.

- Perhaps the remaining part of Hungate Development surrounded by billboards could be transformed into a green space?
- Lighting inside the Hungate Reading Cafe seems to be insufficient for reading and there is an issue with ventilation. Perhaps that is result of the facility being created on a budget?
- Spark York provided space for the community association meetings before. Perhaps that could be explored as an option?
- Which of the Walmgate Regeneration Proposals stand out and would be best delivered at the earliest opportunity? Is the amenity planting quickest to achieve? *Out of all the proposals mentioned probably the heritage trail would be quickest to deliver. Creation of shared spaces and closing through routes would not require significant capital investment, however human resources required would be significant due to complexity of land ownership and further community engagement needed to deliver it in a positive way that is agreed by everyone who would be affected.*
- With more houses being proposed it is inevitable that more cars will be visiting the area which will negatively impact on available parking and increase air pollution. *The planned 36 new homes will not be eligible to apply for a resident parking permit. The development will feature five disabled parking bays and bicycle storage facilities.*
- Will there be a net reduction in available parking spaces in the area because of the proposed developments? *The concept for Hope Street would mean that some parking spaces would be removed to provide space for amenity planting, rain gardens etc.* I agree with the concept to try reducing visitor car journeys; however I believe that taking away residents parking spaces will be met with a pushback.
- Issues raised about affordability and availability of housing and need for more projects like Willow House.
- Concerns were raised about the numbers of homes that had been converted to Short Term Holiday Lets in Walmgate and, particularly, George Street.
- There was interested support for the wider South Walmgate regeneration and the communal edible garden aspects.
- The matter of funding for taking the regeneration forward was raised and explanations of what might be possible with the York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.
- Discussion about security and crime issues, some particular tenant related, particularly in the Navigation Road area. Threats of violence and knife carrying in relation to the drug dealing was raised, along with disturbing noisy and abusive domestic arguments in public. The

use of the communal activity spaces for drinking, urination on property walls, and the messy state of the bin areas was also raised. Concerns were expressed in relation to the complete inaction by the authorities involved regarding the drug dealing, despite extensive reporting and complaints, the impact of boarded up windows and this situation on the area and other tenants.

- A view was expressed that it would have been helpful for the new estate manager to have been at the meeting. A request was made that when the next estate walkabout was arranged that tenants should be notified in advance.
- Further issues by the Hope Street garages were raised, with youths climbing on the roofs, with a request for anti-climb paint to be applied. A question was asked why they were being demolished if their location wasn't to be used itself for new housing? Also, what measures would be taken after demolition to protect the security of the properties behind the garages?
- A comment was raised saying they liked the new planting down Hope Street but asked who would then maintain it?
- It was felt at one of the discussion tables that number one priority for estate improvements should be improving security and tackling problem tenants. Money was being spent on other things like the Bar Walls replanting, but not on their core priorities.

5. HAVE YOUR SAY 8:20PM

Following the group discussions Cllr Clarke asked residents if they had any questions or comments in relation to other local issues.

Q – Is the Walmgate Community Association still active?

A – The Community Association was active a little while ago and we are keen to see that revived. Anyone interested in being involved please speak with Shiobhan and Michal.

Q – I believe that there is a new Housing Management Officer for the area. Do they organise walkabouts, or is there a way to meet with them to raise housing related issues?

A – The new Housing Management Officer for the area is Lyndsay Downes and we will pass this request on to her. The Community Association used to host walkabouts and Councillors attended them previously. This could be restarted if there are residents interested in this.

Before closing the meeting Cllr Merrett invited everyone to attend the Ward Committee meeting on 5th January 2026, 6:30pm at Theathre@41, 41 Monkgate. The meeting agenda will include listening and responding to residents about the proposed Rougier Route bus priority zone aimed to improve journey times and road safety proposals for the south part of Huntington Road to address issues with road crossing and cyclists' safety.

The meeting closed at 20:27

, Chair

[The meeting started at Time Not Specified and finished at Time Not Specified].