

## YORK GUILDHALL SCRUTINY REPORT

### Additional meeting Wednesday 16 September 2015

#### Detailed consideration of options for the future use of the Guildhall complex

1. At Executive on 30 July the report, as approved, confirmed that officers would undertake a review exploring a range of different options for the office elements of the site, looking specifically at the following options :
  - **Option 1 - Grade A generic office**, probably requiring new build annex, where refurb is unlikely to produce the quality of office required.
  - **Option 2 - A commercially focused scheme** - likely to revolve around restaurants / cafe bars and leisure uses.
  - **Option 3 - A new build annex with generic Grade A office and introducing residential or holiday let accommodation on upper levels.**
  - **Option 4 – A refurbished annex option with a serviced office / virtual office offer to the broader creative industries sector.**
2. The feasibility work and the business case presented to cabinet on 16 December 2014 will be reviewed. The capital costs and business cases for the different use scenarios will be evaluated.
3. The review is being reported to scrutiny as a cross party working group, with additional information presented by external experts.
4. Meetings have been scheduled in September to ensure that the review can benefit from cross party member input, whilst allowing for completion and report back to October Executive, to avoid any unnecessary further delay to the project programme.
5. The pros and cons of each of the options; including for the different uses and tenancy models for office use, commercial leisure use

and any residential potential will be presented alongside cost plans and outline business cases.

6. It is important to be clear about the areas under consideration, where the Guildhall complex comprises the following elements:

See outline plan – annex 1

**Zone 1 - Medieval Guildhall**

**Zone 2 – South range**

**Zone 3 - Victorian Council Offices inc Council Chamber**

**Zone 4 - C 20th North Annex (former PO block)**

**Zone 5 - Hutments (riverside garden)**

**Zone 6 - Boatyard (not all in CYC ownership)**

**Zone 7 - Mansion House**

7. The Mansion House is not under consideration here, but it is clearly important that links are maintained with the Opening Doors project currently being delivered, with HLF funding, especially where there is potential to extend the Mansion House offer and educational outreach work into the Guildhall and Council Chamber spaces.
8. For the purposes of this review it is primarily zones 3 & 4 that are under consideration.
9. The options appraisal and feasibility work to date suggested that the complex as a whole would benefit from a mixed use approach to maximise its potential and to improve public access to the riverside.
10. The feasibility work highlighted the potential for zones 2 and 5 at the periphery of the complex to accommodate leisure (food and drink) uses, and Executive accepted that we would continue to explore these options in more detail by involving external commercial expertise.
11. The demolition of the Hutments (zone 5) has created a significant opportunity to create a new riverside ‘pavilion’ and riverside courtyard garden space.
12. The Council’s and community use of the Guildhall Main Hall and the Council Chamber, with the requirement for some supporting ancillary accommodation was also agreed ( zone 1 and part zone 3). A range of potential improvements to both the accessibility / functionality and environmental performance of the main hall are proposed, but the funding for these, beyond re-roofing is not

secured and their viability will ultimately be affected by the range of possible revenue generating uses that can be agreed.

13. Zone 6 offers the potential for an additional phase of development to deliver the vision proposed by the RIBA competition winning entry, and the City's aspiration for an accessible riverside. Work is ongoing to assess whether there is the potential for this additional phase to be brought forward.
14. This **review therefore concentrates on Zones 3 & 4**. This is the area that had previously been considered as office accommodation for Digital Media and Arts Businesses :
15. The existing Guildhall accommodation comprises approx 2000m<sup>2</sup> of usable accommodation across the complex as follows:
  - Basement : c 150m<sup>2</sup> of storage plus plant / circulation
  - Ground Floor level
  - First Floor level
  - Second Floor level
16. One 3 (the Victorian office area) is characterised by cellular office accommodation which could be upgraded to a higher standard, but cannot provide modern office floor-plates and there is some limitation where access is shared with access to the main hall / council chamber.
17. Zone 4 (the annex) is currently poorly connected to zone 3 and accessibility is made more difficult because of the different floor levels and circulation routes.
18. Both areas suffer from poor servicing / amenities and access issues, with considerable disconnection between different elements of the accommodation – see existing floor plans annex 2.
19. The feasibility study highlighted an approach to resolving these issues based on both refurbishment and new build options to create attractive modern office accommodation – see feasibility study floor plans annex 3.
20. The options being considered here are likely to require the new build option to achieve the level of flexibility in the floor-plates necessary to configure the differing accommodation / use options. At subsequent design stages a more detailed analysis of the most cost effective option can be carried out.

21. A tabulated appraisal of the pros and cons of each option will be presented to the meeting together with a financial appraisal including both the estimated construction / conversion costs and an outline business case.
22. For each option we have based the appraisal on the feasibility work undertaken to date, and modified this to suit the proposed uses as set out in each case. This approach should provide greater consistency for comparisons to be made. However, a more detailed consideration of the options could necessarily be undertaken on the basis of further and more detailed design work.
23. To inform the consideration of these options we have invited the following experts to address the committee :
24. **David Fraser – Chief Executive York Civic Trust.** A previously; Regional Director of English Heritage based in the York office, Director of Environment at Government Office Yorkshire and Humber and most recently a Director with the Landmark Trust.
25. **Richard Flanagan – Director Flanagan James Property Consultants** – Chartered Surveyor – Director at York Science Park and Past President of Leeds, York and N Yorks Chamber of Commerce.
26. **Prof Chris Bailey** – York St John University, Chair of York@Large, Chair of Pilot Theatre Board, and previously Dean of Arts, Environment and Technology at Leeds Metropolitan University.
27. Each brings a wealth of expertise and experience in relation to both the City and the options under consideration for the future of one of the City's most important Heritage Assets.

### **Guildhall project options review**

#### **28. Option 1 – generic grade A office**

This option would require a new build annex to deliver the necessary standard of accommodation and flexibility for open fully serviced floor plates, with the necessary environmental control. May also require longer lease agreements to secure tenancy.

In summary the advantages / challenges are as follows :

#### **Advantages :**

- Central York Business Address

- Highly Accessible location with good transport links
- Prime riverside location with river views from office suites
- Adjacent to City Centre amenities

### **Challenges :**

- Access off York Foot streets – No parking on site
- No obvious ‘front door’ - access to some areas would need to be shared with access to other uses / users
- Could be ‘too small’ for major company
- Not all office areas can achieve same fit out standard or flexibility in sub division.

29. **Option 2 - A commercially focused scheme** - likely to revolve around restaurants / cafe bars and leisure uses.

This option would probably require a new build annex to deliver the necessary floor plates, with fully serviced environmental control. May also require longer lease agreements to secure tenancies.

In summary the advantages / challenges are as follows :

### **Advantages :**

- York City Centre riverside Location
- Prime Riverside location with river views and some external spaces
- Adjacent to other City Centre attractions
- Heritage attraction of Buildings

### **Challenges :**

- Access off York Foot streets – for servicing and deliveries
- No ‘passing trade’ in the absence of a ‘front door’ on thro’ routes.
- Ability to draw custom / footfall to a number of individual units could be problematic, especially at upper levels.
- Environmental considerations for multiple units with waste storage and extract likely to be particular issues.

- Adjacent to other City Centre attractions

30. **Option 3 - A new build annex with generic grade A office and introducing residential accommodation on upper levels.**

This option would probably require new build to achieve the necessary floor plates and structural / access / servicing requirements

In summary the advantages / challenges are as follows :

**Advantages :**

Prime Central York Address

Prime Riverside location with river views from office suites and residential units

Adjacent to City Centre Amenities

**Challenges :**

Access off York Foot streets – No Car Parking on site

Creating separate / protected / secure access to residential units

Creating separate / secure waste / recycling facilities for residential units in addition to commercial elements

Potential conflict between residential and other commercial / leisure uses in tight city centre location.

Leasehold options for residential elements vs. other uses / tenancies in scheme

31. **Option 4 – A refurbished annex option with a serviced office / virtual office offer to the broader creative industries sector.**

This option could be delivered with both a refurb and extension option and a new build option.

In summary the advantages / challenges are as follows :

**Advantages :**

Central York Business Address

Highly Accessible location with Good transport links

Prime Riverside location with river views from office suites

Characterful Heritage Offices attractive to Creative Businesses – where a ‘business club’ / ‘virtual office’ model may work

Potential to more easily combine public and community access with business use.

Adjacent to City Centre Amenities

**Challenges :**

Access off York Foot streets – No Car Parking on site

Business model requires high levels of occupancy

Requires an operating partner with the right ‘ethos’.

32. A summary tabulation of the pros / cons in each case together with the capital costs and business case projects will be presented for each option in the meeting.
33. In addition to the 4 options agreed by Executive in July, the option to make the best use of the existing complex could also be explored and considered. This option would not require a major capital investment, but would not therefore address the underlying issues with the condition of the building fabric / building services or improve the layout / legibility / accessibility of the complex.
34. **Members are asked to consider the information presented here and offer comments and feedback to inform; any further work considered to be necessary at this stage, and the preparation of the Executive report scheduled for consideration at the October Executive meeting, with a particularly focus on the drafting of the options analysis section.**

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**Annexes**

**Annex 1 – Site Layout and zone plan**

**Annex 2 – Existing Floor Plans / summary schedule**

**Annex 3 – Feasibility study Floor Plans / summary schedule**