

Report to Full Council from the Deputy Leader of the Council

York Central:

Proposals for York Central are due to go before the Council's Planning Committee before the end of March.

The proposals for York Central would bring in an estimated £1.16 billion in GVA to York's local economy, deliver 2,500 new homes, provide 112,000 square metres of new commercial space and create up to 6,500 new jobs.

If planning approval were to be granted for the scheme, work could commence on delivering the necessary infrastructure on site as early as the summer.

Castle Gateway:

The first phase of the Castle Gateway masterplan, including planning applications, is due to be submitted in late spring of this year. The proposed developments are the crucial first stages to deliver a new public space around Clifford's Tower and the Eye of York.

As part of the plans, a new public bridge spanning the River Foss would connect Piccadilly and the rear of the Castle Museum, opening up a planned cycle and pedestrian route along the river into town.

A number of drop-in events will be held featuring an exhibition of the proposals and the opportunity to talk to Council Officers about the plans. There is also the chance to take guided walks of the area to explore the developments on location.

Local Plan:

According to newly published evidence from the Council's advisors, GL Hearn, the housing numbers provided in the City's recently submitted

Local Plan robustly meet the City's needs, after having taken into account new data on projected population growth and predicted demographic changes in York.

In the updated report, now submitted to the Government's Planning Inspectors, GL Hearn has calculated an updated 'Objectively Assessed Housing Need' figure of 790 dwellings per annum. This confirms to the Council that the 867 houses per annum proposed in the submitted Local Plan can be shown to robustly meet requirements.

It has also been recommended by the Council's Executive to remove housing site allocations at Queen Elizabeth Barracks, Strensall and Land at Howard Road, Strensall. This follows recent objections made by Natural England, which highlighted that there would be significant effects on the integrity of Strensall Common, a protected site, if proposed housing sites adjacent to the Common remain in the Local Plan.

With the removal of the Queen Elizabeth Barracks site from the Plan, the Council continues to await further instructions from the Planning Inspectors regarding the next step of the Local Plan Hearing Process, which the Executive hopes will take place as soon as possible.

Libraries:

The future of York's libraries has been secured for the next 15 years, as a new £32 million contract for the library and archive service was awarded to Explore Libraries and Archives back in February.

An additional £300,000 will be invested by the Council to ensure all 14 libraries in the city remain open over the next 15 years. In addition, a further £4.3 million of capital investment has been secured in the recent Council Budget to improve and upgrade library buildings across the city.

Brexit preparations:

The Council continues to work with a wide range of partners to ensure that York is as prepared as it can be on the impact of Brexit. Whilst the implications of Brexit continue to remain unclear and uncertain, the Council will continue to ensure that residents and businesses are as supported as possible, including signposting individuals and businesses to information where appropriate.

Bootham Park:

The Government have indicated that they will be proceeding with the sale of Bootham Park to the highest bidder, despite the alternative proposals worked on by the Council. Since the Bootham Park site was vacated, representatives from the Council have been in discussion with stakeholders to explore potential options for Bootham Park. These discussions focussed on retaining Bootham Park for the benefit of the city, whilst also protecting its significant heritage.

In response to the Government's very disappointing decision, the Council will now work to determine how best to approach the Government's preferred bidder, in order to ensure the best value for residents.

Housing Delivery Programme:

Plans have been approved for the Council to embark on its biggest house-building programme since the 1970s.

Following Executive approval, the Council will begin work to deliver more than 600 new homes across the city, including 250 affordable homes.

The homes will be built across eight sites, rather than the originally planned seven, thanks to the removal of the HRA borrowing cap.

The programme will also include a mix of council houses at the lowest available rents and a range of new, low-cost home ownership houses,

where eligible residents can buy between 25% and 75% of their home, while paying rent on the remaining proportion.

New homes delivered under the programme will also be used to support the Older Persons Accommodation Programme, which will help elderly residents to live independently for longer.

Clean Air Zone

The Council will invest £1.6 million in York's new Clean Air Zone, the first voluntary Clean Air Zone in the country.

The Clean Air Zone in York is aimed at improving exhaust emissions from local bus services and is a key proposal in the Council's efforts to tackle traffic pollution in York's city centre, which can have a harmful impact on people's health. Unlike other parts of the country where a Clean Air Zone is a mandatory requirement, a new voluntary Clean Air Zone will be introduced in York by 2020, based on evidence collected by the Council on air pollution in the city.