

**Local Plan Working Group**

**23 January 2017**

**Portfolio of the Executive Member for Finance and Performance  
and the Executive Member for Economic Development &  
Community Engagement**

**Report of the Corporate Director of Economy and Place**

**Castle Gateway Vision and Draft Area of Opportunity Policy**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the vision for the regeneration of the area around Piccadilly, Coppergate Centre, the Eye of York, Clifford's Tower, St George's Field and the Foss Basin, referred to as the Castle Gateway. A map of the area is attached at Annex 1. It also sets out a draft Area of Opportunity Policy for adoption in the Local Plan. The Local Plan Working Group (LPWG) are asked to provide comments on this for the consideration of the Executive who will be considering a broader report on the future vision and delivery of a regeneration of the area at their meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017.
2. City of York Council (CYC) are one of the principal land owners in the area and many parts of the area are underused, semi derelict or of poor quality. As the principal landowner, the council are instrumental in delivering a joined-up regeneration of the area which will maximise social and economic benefits for the city. Following a report to Executive in October 2015 officers were asked to develop a vision for the area.
3. This report sets out work undertaken over the last year to progress the project and outlines:
  - a. The vision for the regeneration of the area.
  - b. The Local Plan draft Area of Opportunity Policy to support that vision.

## Background

4. This area was previously referred to as the 'Southern Gateway'. The area includes the site of the former York Castle and it is proposed that the name be changed to Castle Gateway, a name which is both more descriptive and meaningful to the people of York. It references that this was the historic Castle Gate ward, and builds on the geographical association with key cultural assets in the area.
5. The Castle Gateway area covers the length of Piccadilly, the Coppergate Shopping Centre and the Eye of York and runs through to St George's Field and the Foss Basin (see Annex 1). Much of the area is of low quality with significant dereliction and underdevelopment and yet the area has great potential in both its location and its historic and cultural assets. The area sits largely within the city walls and within the Historic Core Conservation Area, at the confluence of two rivers, the Ouse and the Foss.
6. The area contains a range of private land owners and a substantial amount of public estate with three museums/attractions (Castle Museum, Fairfax House and the Jorvik Viking Centre), three court buildings, many listed structures and a historic monument of international significance (Clifford's Tower).
7. Piccadilly and the Eye of York have been the subject of previous unsuccessful redevelopment projects. Key assets within the area (Coppergate leasehold, Banana Warehouse and Ryedale House) have changed hands a number of times and been held by the Administrator. The assets were recently acquired by Steamrock Capital and now sit in the single ownership of a company who have expressed their keenness to work with the council to develop them. This raises the possibility that holistic area regeneration may once again be feasible.
8. Over the last few years there has been some commercial development predominantly on the periphery of the Castle Gateway area. As a principal land holder the council has a major role to play to ensure that successful and sustainable area regeneration occurs, maximising the economic benefits for the city. As Local Planning Authority the council has an opportunity to help shape a new vision for the area, to exert influence on how commercial interests operate within the area, and to capture planning gain to contribute to the uplift of the amenity and accessibility of the area. Without any guiding policy it is possible that continued incremental development, though potentially an improvement

on the current state, may not achieve any broader aims of improving the city centre – missing a vital opportunity to regenerate this important gateway to the city to a high standard.

## **Defining the Castle Gateway**

9. The Castle Gateway can be split into 3 different areas:

### The Castle-Piccadilly area

10. This includes the Castle precinct, the upper section of Tower Street and the section of Piccadilly south of the River Foss. It is the main area of opportunity for investment in the Castle Gateway and incorporates a number of redevelopment sites suitable for high quality mixed use development. The River Foss is a barrier to pedestrian movement through the area and better integration between Piccadilly, the Castle precinct and the City Centre is a key issue.
11. The Castle Car Park sits in the shadow of Clifford's Tower and is a hugely inappropriate setting for such a significant historic monument. However, it is one of the busiest car parks in the city and creates an essential income stream for the council. The car park and access roads are a barrier to pedestrian access to both Clifford's Tower and the Castle Museum. Despite the presence of beautiful buildings, cultural attractions, and one of York's largest areas of open public realm footfall into, and utilisation of, the public space is relatively low.
12. Across the River Foss sits Piccadilly, a street that has a high level of empty, unattractive and derelict buildings. Footfall down the street is low and the River Foss acts as a barrier to movement. Piccadilly would be vastly improved with better buildings and streetscape and greater integration with the city centre and the Eye of York.
13. Asset ownership is diverse. The council own 17-21 Piccadilly and the Castle Mills Car Park and a range of undeveloped assets are now in the sole ownership of Steamrock Capital as part of their development portfolio, principally the Banana Warehouse and Ryedale House. The NCP car park, which sits between these buildings, is in the separate private ownership of Northminster who have signalled their intention to bring forward the site for a hotel with an element of residential accommodation.

## Foss Basin and the Ouse Riverside

14. The area includes the Foss Basin and St George's Field, the Ouse Riverside, Tower Gardens, Clifford Street, the section of Tower Street to the west of the Castle, and part of the dualled inner ring road. The area is strategically important but wholly underutilised. With excellent proximity to the historic heart of the city, fantastic views, bounded by the Rivers Ouse and Foss, there is a significant, albeit less clearly defined, development opportunity. This must however, be balanced against some of the development constraints, as the site lies in the functional floodplain and hosts the Foss Barrier which is essential to the city's flood defences.
15. Occupancy rates for the car park are mediocre, depending on seasonal variations, and the car park adds little to the surroundings. The inner ring road acts as a barrier to pedestrian and cycle movement and vehicular exit from the car park can be difficult in heavy traffic. The historic 'New Walk' and the tow path are attractive but benefit little from current uses of the adjoining area. When 'New Walk' is in flood this also results in pedestrians utilising the vehicle exit on to the difficult and dangerous to cross inner ring road. The Foss Basin is underused and unattractive and the water asset is not embraced or exploited.
16. The council own the leasehold of the area. There are some short term leases for moorings on the Foss Basin and the Foss Barrier is leased to the Environment Agency. They currently have a temporary extended land take within St George's Field car park to undertake emergency works to the Foss Barrier, and also have a live planning application for a permanent redevelopment of the barrier which will slightly increase the footprint of the previous building.

## Coppergate/Fossgate

17. The area includes Coppergate, the Coppergate Centre, north Piccadilly and the resurgent Fossgate, connecting the central shopping area with the rest of the Castle Gateway. A main transport route through the city centre runs from Ouse Bridge to Pavement, separating the Coppergate/Fossgate area from the central shopping area. Pedestrian movement between the areas is hindered by busy crossroads, high volumes of traffic, and narrow pavements.
18. The Coppergate Centre has struggled to generate footfall and is disconnected from the Eye of York to the south due to Castle Car Park,

and the main city centre shopping areas by the Coppergate road junctions. It is successful for major retailers but has struggled to retain businesses in smaller retail units and is in need of investment to improve the retail offer.

## **Shaping the Vision**

19. The principles for the regeneration of the area were established in the inception report to the Executive in October 2015. This established the aims of the project, which are set out below:
  - I. To improve the quality of the Castle Gateway and contribute to the economic vibrancy and prosperity of the city
  - II. The area could include quality public space that will increase footfall, and create a culturally, socially and economically vibrant area of the city
  - III. Development will respect and augment the heritage and cultural assets
  - IV. Development will be environmentally sustainable
  - V. Development will exploit and celebrate the important river setting
  - VI. Provide new homes and release pressure on green belt land
  - VII. Maximise financial return from council assets to reduce pressure on ongoing budgets
  - VIII. Improve quality of car parking provision and promote the use of sustainable modes of transport
  - IX. Improve pedestrian and cycle routes and accessibility throughout the area with better access and permeability, particularly across the River Foss and Tower Street
  - X. Improve the setting of Clifford's Tower
  - XI. Improve the quality of the streetscape particularly along Piccadilly
20. These principles have been refined over the last year to form an overarching vision for the Castle Gateway through discussion with landowners and stakeholders, consultation with Executive and Ward

Members, and exploration of the detail of the development opportunities and infrastructure.

### **The Castle Gateway Vision**

21. The vision for the Castle Gateway interprets the above aims to provide a tangible and deliverable vision of how the regeneration of the Castle Gateway can be delivered. It is an exciting and ambitious plan which will reshape the area and realise the significant potential of this important part of the city. The LPWG are asked to provide comments on this vision for the consideration of Executive who will be asked to approve this vision on 26 January 2017.

The Vision would:

- I. To seek to relocate the existing surface level Castle Car Park away from Clifford's Tower.
- II. Replace the lost car parking capacity through alternative options such as underground car parking on the same site or a purpose built multi-storey car park in an alternative location.
- III. Create a high quality, mixed use commercial development on the banks of the Foss, on the site of the Castle Car Park, respecting a build line that follows the historic line of Castlegate.
- IV. Create a new public space on the Castle Car Park to link with the area in front of the Castle Museum and the Crown Court to create a re-imagined Eye of York area that would articulate the varied historical narratives of this important area of the city.
- V. The redevelopment of the Castle Museum and Clifford's Tower as the anchor cultural attractions for the Castle Gateway area.
- VI. Create a new pedestrian cycle bridge across the Foss which will connect the area to Piccadilly and on to Walmgate and Fossgate creating new lateral routes across the city centre.
- VII. Create new riverside walkways along one or both banks of the Foss to improve access to St George's Field/Foss Basin and into the city.
- VIII. Enable the revitalisation of the Coppergate Centre's retail and residential offer by extending the leasehold term.

- IX. Redevelop the low quality sites on Piccadilly (including Ryedale House, Banana Warehouse, NCP car park, Castle Mills car park and 17-21 Piccadilly).
- X. Explore long term options to realise the potential of St George's Field and the Foss Basin.

### **Transport Plan**

- 22. In determining the vision, consideration needs to be given to the scope for any change to the transport network. This needs to be given due consideration in the master planning process and is an ongoing and evolving process that will both drive changes to, and be shaped by, the vision.
- 23. There are existing capital budgets set aside for junction/signal improvements in the City Centre area and enhancements to the foot streets area and peripheral streets surrounding the core pedestrianised area. In addition to these measures the following opportunities have been identified for further exploration:
  - Piccadilly – opportunities to reduce the width of the carriageway and improve the foot streets and bus stop arrangements.
  - Piccadilly coach drop off point – as part of a wider strategy for coach parking to be housed out of town with designated drop off points this location could be considered.
  - Lower Tower Street – should car parking be relocated away from Castle Car Park this may reduce the need for the size of carriageway between Tower Gardens and Clifford's Tower, facilitating better pedestrian routes.
  - Castle Mills Bridge/Fishergate area - Opportunities for improving cycle/pedestrian (and vehicular) access to the Castle Gateway area from south of the ring road.
  - Coppergate/Pavement – opportunities to reduce vehicular flow and enhance pedestrian movement between the city centre and Castle Gateway area.

## **Draft Area of Opportunity Policy for the Local Plan**

24. Both the area as a whole and the proposed development sites are subject to a number of constraints and challenges to delivering this vision. It is an area of significant historical importance and as a consequence has a very high level of public interest, investment, and attachment. It is also subject to a number of conservation and archaeological considerations, and a failure to address these planning considerations in the past has resulted in the failure of previous proposed schemes. However, the outcomes of those failed planning processes have provided important and useful clarity as to the form and type of development that is likely to be acceptable in the area, and resulted in realistic expectations from prospective commercial partners as to what scale of development is acceptable and achievable.
25. It is vital that the vision is translated into meaningful planning policies that ensure the council is able to guide the development principles for the area. It has long been recognised that a comprehensive planning approach is needed to secure high quality regeneration in this significant and sensitive historic environment and draft policies to guide development of the area are contained within the Local Plan Development Control Draft 2005 and the Draft Local Plan, supported by other non statutory Planning Guidance and evidence bases (see list in Background Papers). The previous draft Area of Opportunity Policy for the 2014 draft of the plan focussed specifically on Castle Piccadilly. Now that the regeneration area has been expanded to incorporate the whole of the Castle Gateway and the vision has been further refined it is necessary to recast the Area of Opportunity Policy for the latest iteration of the emerging Local Plan.
26. A key challenge for the local planning authority is to ensure that the planning guidance for the area safeguards this important historic environment whilst allowing stakeholders and land owners to make the most of heritage and commercial assets and the council to maximise planning gain. Wherever possible the council will seek to work in partnership with developers and build a consensus, but it is also vital to provide a planning framework for the area that has sufficient weight to ensure the parameters set out in the vision are met.
27. The revised draft Castle Gateway Area of Opportunity Policy is set out at Annex 2 with a map of the Castle Gateway Development Principles at Annex 3. This policy is being considered by this meeting of the LPWG in



advance of the Executive meeting, and the LPWG minutes will be circulated to the Executive prior to their meeting on 26 January 2017 for their consideration.

28. The policy relates directly to the vision and has been written in consultation with the Local Plan team, conservation, and development management. Even if approved by the Executive the Draft Castle Gateway Area of Opportunity Policy itself will have only very limited weight as a material consideration when determining planning applications, particularly in advance of consultation on the proposed new Policy in the Local Plan process. However, the evidence base that underpins the Draft Policy is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

### **Consultation**

29. The proposed vision set out in this report has been discussed with stakeholders and land owners in the area and with ward councillors and ward committees from Guildhall and Fishergate Wards.
30. A comprehensive public consultation will help to shape and develop proposals that emerge from this vision. It will be proposed to Executive that this should be developed through a community forum approach, as employed on the York Central project.

### **Council Plan**

31. Under the draft council plan objectives the project will assist in the creation of a Prosperous City for All, and vision to be a Council that listens to residents, particularly by ensuring that:
  - Everyone who lives in the city can enjoy its unique heritage and range of activities.
  - Visitors, businesses and residents are impressed with the quality of our city.
  - Local businesses can thrive.
  - Environmental Sustainability underpins everything we do.
  - We are entrepreneurial, by making the most of commercial activities.
  - We engage with our communities, listening to their views and taking them into account.

- We celebrate and champion the diversity of our population and encourage everyone to play an active role in the city.

## **Implications**

32. The following implications have been assessed:

**Financial** – The financial implications of undertaking further work to deliver this vision will be set out in the Executive report.

**Human Resources (HR)** – There are no HR implications.

**Equalities** – As proposals for a scheme are developed a Community Impact Assessment will be undertaken.

**Legal** – There are no legal implications in seeking views from the LPWG. Subsequent progression of the local plan policy through the emerging Local Plan will require Executive approval and updated impact assessments to comply with legislation.

**Information Technology (IT)** - There are no IT implications.

**Crime and Disorder** - The detailed design of any future scheme will look at making the riverside more publicly accessible and will require detailed consideration of crime and disorder implications and there will be structured input from the Police Architectural Liaison officer.

**Property** – All property implications of delivering this vision will be set out in the Executive report.

## **Risk Management**

33. Failure to take action to shape the Castle Gateway may lead to uncontrolled and undesirable development along Piccadilly or a continuation of the sterilisation of the area. The policy identified in this report will enable the first stage in the implementation of a planning policy to provide a framework for determining applications, and ensure the development of a masterplan for the public realm and infrastructure of the area.

34. The regeneration of the Castle Gateway will be delivered by, and impact on, a wide range of stakeholders and will generate significant public interest. Stakeholder management and public engagement will be vital in ensuring the success of the project and will underpin all elements of the project work streams.
35. All future plans will require planning permission. A full risk register will be developed by the project and will be regularly reviewed by the project board as the project progresses.

### **Recommendation**

36. The Local Plan Working Group are asked :-

- a) To note the renaming of the regeneration area as Castle Gateway.

Reason: To change the name to better reflect the geography and nature of the area.

- b) To consider the vision for the Castle Gateway and provide comments to the Executive.

Reason: To deliver the regeneration aims of the Castle Gateway project.

- c) To consider the Castle Gateway draft Area of Opportunity Policy for inclusion in the emerging Local Plan and provide comments to the Executive.

Reason: To ensure the Castle Gateway vision is enshrined in planning policy.

- d) To note the intention to develop a masterplan for the development of the council assets, infrastructure and public spaces within the Castle Gateway area.

Reason: To provide a cohesive and informed design approach to the Castle Gateway.

- e) To note the intention to create a stakeholder group to guide and develop the masterplan.

Reason: To ensure the masterplan is driven by key stakeholders as principal custodians for this area of the city.

## Contact Details

### Author:

#### Andy Kerr

Castle Gateway Project  
Commercial Project Manager  
Tel: (01904) 554 153

#### Tracey Carter

Assistant Director  
Regeneration and Asset  
Management

Tel: (01904) 553 419

### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

#### Neil Ferris

Corporate Director of Economy and  
Place

### Executive Members Responsible for the Report:

Cllrs C. Steward & K Aspden

Report  
Approved



Date 13 January  
2017

### Specialist Implications Officer(s):

Patrick Looker, Finance Manager  
Alison Hartley, Senior Solicitor, Planning

**Wards Affected: Guildhall and Fishergate**



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

### Annexes

Annex 1 – Map of Castle Gateway draft Area of Opportunity  
Annex 2 – Castle Gateway draft Area of Opportunity Policy  
Annex 3 – Map of Castle Gateway Development Principles

**Background Papers:** None

### Glossary of Abbreviations

LPWG – Local Plan Working Group