

## Open Draft / Castle Gateway: What matters about the area to the people who use it? What would they like to do there in the future?

### Introduction:

Welcome to the open draft of the My Castle Gateway Brief. Drawing on the My Castle Gateway [events](#), [interviews](#) and [online archive of public contributions](#), we focus on what matters to people about the area and what they'd like to be able to do there. This document will inform the Masterplanners working on the Castle Gateway project and help them develop options for the future of the area.

This is a working document. We seek to openly share where we have got to so far but the brief is still open to change. We are still running events which will help us add to the brief further. We want to share it now so there is time to get feedback from you. We will use your feedback in drawing up a second iteration.

In September we will be launching Step 2 of the My Castle Gateway Project. Step 2 will explore openly the challenges raised by the high-level ideas so they can be developed and refined. [You can see the events we have planned here.](#)

You can comment on the open draft in various ways. We will post it on twitter and in our facebook group. You can comment below. [Or fill in this survey.](#) The deadline for feedback is **8<sup>th</sup> September 2017.**

### Highlights from the Brief

People would like to be able to:

- Come together at a [new public space](#) that connects Clifford's Tower, the Eye of York and Tower Gardens: for [events](#), [protests](#) and [commemorations](#)
- Understand and explore the [layered histories of the area](#)
- Enjoy the [Foss and the Ouse](#). To be able to [walk and cycle up the Foss](#) and the Ouse into town, to be able to sit and [see the Foss](#) and [appreciate its wildlife](#)
- Move easily and safely around the area on [foot](#) and on [bike](#) and to connect into routes beyond
- See [independent businesses](#) and [community arts thrive](#)
- See [car traffic](#) and [parking](#) dealt with in ways which do not conflict with these other uses
- [Get involved](#) in [making the changes happen](#) and in [making the area work](#) in the long-term.

### Introduction

As a Roman fort, as an Anglian and Viking place for the exchange of goods and ideas, as a Norman castle built between two rivers, as a place of 18th century promenade and 19th century politics, authority and imprisonment, the Castle Area

tells the story of York's development and its relationship to the world beyond. For some of that time, Clifford's Tower and the Eye of York have been closed off from the rest of the city. [A castle within a bailey. A folly in a private garden. A prison behind a wall.](#) A place of law and regulation. At other times, in common with the wider area of [St George's Fields](#) and [New Walk](#), it has been a place of arrival and connection to the world, public walking, [political assembly](#) and [protest](#), [being socially visibility](#) and [coming together to have fun](#).

The significance of the area lies in this past of borders, boundaries, walls and power. The area's significance also lies in its equally strong tradition of pulling down walls that divide, of enshrining public rights of way, of [seeking rights and redress](#), of turning prisons into public museums and of using the city's [two rivers as routes between York and the world](#).

The contested nature of the Castle Gateway area defines it. This is an area where 'significance' is not simple and cannot be settled. It is an area where 'what matters' needs to be explored from many perspectives through an ongoing and open discussion which makes the future as much as it interprets the past.

Each of the themes below explore what matters, how this relates to what people want to be able to do in the area, and the My Castle Gateway collaborative brief.

*'York is not just a historic city and it is not just a museum. We need to create a feeling of hope, of York regenerating and evolving, of things getting better'* (from a [discussion documented by a walk leader on Opening Up Castle Gateway, 22<sup>nd</sup> July](#))

**Below are key themes that have emerged through the My Castle Gateway process:**

## **MOVEMENT**

### **WHAT MATTERS? *Closed off and forging new connections***

The necessity of castle and prison architecture, and the geography of the site has meant that walls and water have controlled and regulated people and their movement across the Castle Area and Eye of York. Yet other parts of the area, St George's Field and New Walk, have been produced through rights of public access. New 19th and 20th century streets were added to create new connections – Clifford Street, Tower Street, [Gyratory](#), Piccadilly. In the same period, the Rivers were worked hard, increasing connections across the city and to trading links beyond, while the buildings faced away from the water. Yet now there is a strong interest in the working histories of the rivers and, especially, a desire to see, use, appreciate the [wildlife](#) of, and [walk alongside the Foss](#). [Walking](#) has a long tradition in the area, both the public stroll and the pragmatic [short cut](#), the importance of walking has increased by recent development of river walks downstream to South Bank via Millennium Bridge and extended to long distance walking and cycling routes beyond York's boundaries.

## BRIEF:

People want to be able to:

- Understand the layers of histories of the area and how York developed at the confluence of the two rivers and to make sense of 'York Castle'
- Walk or cycle up from the Foss Basin into town and beyond, with continuous, safe, and (preferably) traffic-free routes
- Cross more easily from Walmgate into the Castle area
- Cycle safely on the Tower Street dual-carriage Gyratory and to easily use it to connect into town and onto Skeldergate Bridge
- See and access the Foss from Piccadilly, preferably via routes which allow circulation
- See and access the Foss from the Castle area and to feel closer to the water
- For development between Piccadilly and the Foss to face onto the Castle area and make the most of the views and connections
- Celebrate and share the industrial history of the Foss and Ouse and to see barges and boats on the Foss
- Move between the Castle area and Tower Gardens more easily and to feel greater connection between them.
- Be able to enjoy Tower Gardens with less background traffic noise
- Be sure blue badge holders can park
- Use Park and Ride in the evening to get into town and reduce the need to drive in and to park
- Breathe freely, less air pollution
- Find their way intuitively in order to reduce need for signposting
- Know parking is dealt with, but in ways which don't conflict with other aspects of the brief
- Park their bikes securely and then walk easily on from there.

Movement and Connection

## PUBLIC SPACES

### *Public events and everyday encounters*

Before the Prison walls enclosed the site in 1834, the Eye of York area was a place of political assembly, a tradition picked up again after the Prison walls came down in the 1930s. It is also a place of collective reflection and of large scale commemoration, alongside small acts of memorisation. At other times, in common with the wider area of St George's Fields and New Walk, it has been a place defined by promenade, public access, political assembly and protest. There is also a tradition of sociability and playfulness: of art, of fairs and of fireworks. Through the My Castle Gateway conversations we can say there is a strong desire – taking into account the whole of the Castle Gateway area – to build on this history of public access and public events.

## BRIEF:

People want to be able to:

- Come together
- Attend large scale [events](#) (music, theatre, fairs)
- Use the Eye of York as a place of [political protest](#)
- [Commemorate and remember](#), especially the 1190 massacre of York's Jewish Community
- Sit down and enjoy the views in lots of different places in the area, including views of the [Ouse and the Foss](#)
- Have spaces where it is possible to reflect, think and remember
- To see interesting things: [art](#), [fountains](#), [wildlife](#), [trees](#)
- To [eat](#) and [drink](#), whether sitting on the ground with a picnic or at cafes/restaurants.
- To linger with [no pressure to buy anything](#)
- Be there at night as well as during the day
- Be there all year round

Public spaces

## OWNERSHIP AND VALUES

### ***WHAT MATTERS? Formal spaces, incremental development, living margins***

There is a formality to the centre of the site. There is the set piece of the Georgian listed buildings. The area is still home to a working court of law. The Eye of York has a sense of occasion, of large-scale events and of big days out at [Clifford's Tower](#) or the [York Castle Museum](#). Yet there is informality and life in the margins, of people making spaces for things they want to do. Where Tower Gardens is maintained as formal gardens, beyond Skeldergate Bridge are trees, [wildflowers are tended by community groups](#) and [people fish](#). Some live in listed 19th century terraces or in new flats with views over the Foss Basin, while others live on [houseboats](#), [want more social housing](#), sleep rough, or are being supported to look for a new home. There might be, at times, cheering, clapping, busking, singing and raised voices. And, at others, there might be [quiet](#), [reflection](#), [peace](#) and wandering alone.

There is a contrast in the grain of the city between the large formal spaces (the setting of Clifford's Tower, the Eye of York) and the more incremental development of [Fossgate](#) and other surrounding streets. Behind these streets are fragments of space such as the area near the Foss, behind Fossgate, known as '[the redbrick](#)'. Formal and organized activities and informal and [do-it-yourself](#) activities have often sat alongside each other. In living memory [those with a bit of cash went to swim at St Georges Bath](#), [while those without jumped across barges in the Foss Basin or dived for coins off the Blue Bridge](#). In this area some spend money [in cafes](#) and pubs, some simply [sit on the Ouse bank](#) and [spend none at all](#).

This area has a tradition of being a working place, of warehouses, of mills. Today the area's more marginal relationship to the commercial centres of Parliament Street, Coney Street and Coppergate Shopping Centre and beyond has meant that, alongside larger plots, Piccadilly and Castlegate now can be home to [independent](#)

businesses, creative start ups and community arts initiatives, a tradition than many want to see cultivated further.

## **BRIEF:**

People want to be able to:

- Shop at independent shops or visit independent cafes or restaurants
- Develop small and independent businesses
- Not have to spend money – a place to hang out for free
- Develop DIY, small-scale community enterprise and community arts
- Be sure that different ways of being in the space will be enabled and encouraged
- Enjoy being in spaces alongside tourists and for both groups to happily co-exist
- Live affordably in their city in low cost social housing

## **LIVING WELL WITH WATER**

### **WHAT MATTERS? ‘Living with water’**

York is only where it is because of the confluence of the Ouse and Foss. The rivers have been used to create defences, fish ponds, routes for travel, trade and pleasure. The Foss Basin is defined by the Foss barrier and pump and is a crucial working space to protect the city from the dangers of its rivers. The rivers have a power that we know we cannot entirely control. Yet, while knowing the dangers they hold, the rivers are also used for pleasure, there is a widely shared desire for more connection to the Ouse and Foss in the future.

## **BRIEF:**

People want to be able to:

- Enjoy the views of both rivers
- Appreciate the wildlife of the rivers
- Use boats – barges and canoes – on the Foss
- Walk and cycle both rivers into town
- Recognise that York will flood, and work creatively with that reality
- See the Foss. Reverse the current situation where the town turns its back on the Foss, and recognise the value that water has in an urban setting.

## **CHANGE AND HOW IT HAPPENS**

### **WHAT MATTERS? *Change and how it happens***

The Castle Gateway area has been defined by ‘transformational episodes’. It is a place where changes – castles and prisons – have been imposed *and* it has been a

place of protest, of seeking democratic rights and redress. One thing that matters to many who have taken part in the My Castle Gateway project so far is that we seek to draw on the democratic traditions of the area, to openly make the future of the area together. While there is [hope and enthusiasm](#), there also remains a [certain cynicism](#) about whether public involvement will be taken seriously. There are [memories of planning battles past](#) and there is an often expressed concern that [money](#) will end up being the main decider. The tussle over the place, who will control it, how people can use it and live here, will continue. How change has happened, and will happen, is crucial to what people have said matters to them about the Castle Gateway area.

## **BRIEF:**

People want to be able to:

- Ensure ongoing engagement in the area during the masterplanning process and beyond
- Get involved long term. For community involvement to extend to option in terms of management of the area in the future

*Note: This document is not seeking to offer a comprehensive statement of significance this will come from the masterplanners work. The document is based entirely on the My Castle Gateway work and is designed to compliment and supplement formal documents produced by City of York Council identifying heritage significance of the area (Local Plan [Heritage Topic Paper](#); [York Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal](#), Areas 13, 14 and 15).*