

Cultural Quarter Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee
16th December 2008
Update on the Local Development Framework – City Centre Area Action Plan

The Local Development Framework

- New style of plan making introduced by the Planning Act in 2004.
- The York LDF will replace the Draft Local Plan.
- Local Development Folder (LDF) is a 'folder' of documents with different roles – a more flexible system.
- Role of public consultation and Sustainability Appraisal strengthened.
- Initially 4 Development Plan Documents (DPDs) are being produced for York.
- The Core Strategy provides the overarching strategic framework for development in the area over a 20 year period. It will identify the housing, employment, retail and leisure development etc needed along with community facilities, open space and the infrastructure required to support this growth and change.
- The Core Strategy sets the objectives for the LDF and the scope and purpose of the other DPDS. The Core Strategy is closely linked with the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- The Allocations DPD identifies the sites needed to deliver the development required by the Core Strategy.
- There are two Area Action Plans being produced: York Northwest Area Action Plan (YNW AAP) and the City Centre AAP. The York Northwest AAP will deliver the development of the York Central and British Sugar sites.
- All the DPDs go through 3 stages of consultation before Examination.
- The 4 DPDs have been through the 1st stage – Issues and Options.
- The Preferred Options of all 4 DPDs will be consulted on in 2009.
- All timetabled to be adopted by the end of 2010.

Purpose of the City Centre AAP

- The City Centre AAP is being produced for a number of reasons, the primary one being the sensitivity of the city centre to change and the need to ensure that new development reflects this sensitivity.
- A successful City Centre is crucial to a successful York. The city's economy and cultural life depends on it. There is significant scope for the city centre to function better in terms of transport and movement and as a venue for festivals and events. A number of areas within the city centre are beginning to look tired.
- The AAP is a key vehicle in delivering a number of the strategic aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy. In particular the City of Culture aims for York to be a city of high quality spaces.
- The AAP is a major opportunity to improve the city centre and this is the first time a comprehensive Plan for the city centre has been produced.

- The AAP must (similar to all other aspects of the LDF) be evidence – based to be able to stand up to public examination.

The Issues and Options Report

- The Issues and Options aimed to gather as many views as possible about the current state of the city centre and people's aspirations for it's future.
- The report focussed on three key themes: Economic Vitality, Historic Environment and Community Life. The report also set out five 'opportunity areas' where the options in the three key themes could be delivered.
- One of these areas is the Cultural Quarter.

Consultation

- We consulted from 28 July to 22 September 2008 through a variety of mediums including press statements, leaflets, posters, targeted workshops, public exhibitions and stakeholder groups. Other consultations are ongoing and a partnership approach will be essential as the plan develops further.
- We received 1700 comments which have been logged and analysed. Main headlines to give a flavour. Full report to Local Development Framework Working Group in January.

Summary of Comments relevant to the Cultural Quarter - General Comments

- Revive York Festival and create an Edinburgh type festival annually.
- Co-ordination of bus stops near the railway station are confusing with a poor layout.
- Need to reduce traffic at St Leonard's Place as it increases the air pollution which is already very poor in that area.
- Museum Gardens feels isolated from the city centre and it is critical to address severance effects of St Leonard's Place.
- Improve green spaces where possible. Need areas of quiet to get away from traffic.
- Need more production/workspaces for artists to use.
- Improvements need to consider all of the community and residents as well as tourists.
- Build on what has been done already with sympathetic new improvements.
- A new green route (bridge) between the Station (arrival point for thousands of visitors) connecting Memorial Gardens over new footbridge to Museum Gardens, Art Gallery, Exhibition Square and the city centre is essential. Consider new access from riverside walk to National Railway Museum (NRM).
- Though the area would benefit from enhancement and co-ordination, this should not be to the detriment of the city as a place of work. The

City centre is primarily a place for citizens and should not be an excessively sanitised museum.

- Homeless/beggars in NRM subway area and Museum Gardens puts people off using those areas especially at night.
- Support for riverside uses on the Ouse alongside the Museum Gardens and access improvements from the City Centre from the gardens would be welcomed.
- Museum Garden railings are listed and there was already a pair of double gates to the riverside (and the railings define both the Esplanade and white Rose Walk) and so further entrances were not supported but improved entrances were.
- Emphasise the Victorian aspects of the Cultural Quarter.
- Support for land above Scarborough Bridge being improved and brought into use in an artistic/culturally interesting way. Support for university students to develop arts facilities e.g. statue walk between the station and the Minster.
- Suggestion of pedestrian way from short term parking area between Platform 1 and Royal York Hotel northwards over eastern portal of Marble Arch tunnel using a narrow area of scrubland between footpath adjacent to Royal Mail sorting office and railway to provide a level link with the existing footway across Scarborough Bridge.
- St Leonard's Place redevelopment (mixed use) should help promote cultural and evening activity in the area as well as redesigning Exhibition Square.
- York needs investment in the tourism infrastructure. Existing and new attractions plus general investment in place. Community stadium at York Northwest.
- York must continue to be a walking city for tourists. This is part of its attracting and diffusing cultural provision into the British Sugar site will add to transport needs – thus subverting sustainability objectives.
- Encourage new quality attractions but priority is to invest in existing spaces/venues such as redundant churches and other buildings.
- Emphasis on quality needed. Develop informal café/culture areas to high standard.
- Potential for a “world class” tourist offer – NRM. St Mary's and the Minster, plus all the richness of the other facilities in our area, art gallery, Theatre Royal etc.
- Need to improve public wealth in the city – link NRM to city centre as a gateway.
- What facilities does the city lack that could be provided at YNW?
- More work is needed in the city centre in fostering a “cultural quarter”.
- A cultural quarter must develop organically to have any real chance of success.
- Support for extension of the footstreets and support to maximise what we already have to provide more activities in the evening such as open air concerts in the parks and late opening of museums and galleries etc.
- Need more for families and older people to attract them into the city in the evening.

Summary of Comments relevant to the Cultural Quarter - Boundary of Cultural Quarter

Include Gillygate, all of the Railway Station, British Rail building, access from the station, North Street Gardens, Clifford's Tower, St Helen's Square, St John's University and Blossom Street. YNW and CC plans need to link together in a more coherent way as very different areas at present. *Note: Government Office have advised that Action Plan boundaries cannot overlap.*

Summary of Comments relevant to the Cultural Quarter - Name of Cultural Quarter

- Many respondents felt that the term Cultural Quarter is unsuitable - what is Culture?
- The implied elitism of Cultural and geographical isolation of quarter needs to be overcome by a strong brand and a clear communication strategy.
- "Cultural Quarter" is not a concept that is understood – seems to be interpreted as exclusive – it has backfired – once it is explained people then support the concept and idea of connectivity.
- Cultural Quarter is wrong term. All of walled city is cultural quarter. Links across the river are essential for any development.
- The term is important but the quality and knowing what it means is more important. Area needs a strong identity to galvanise stakeholders and public interest, distinctive from the retail core, YNW etc. Need explanation of true intent of "cultural quarter", as a concept not a place.
- Quarters are a good idea as it stops the city centre merging onto one and if each area has a common theme it makes the city easier to navigate.
- 95% of respondents supported the issue of the development of a cultural quarter, 5% of respondents were in partial agreement with the issue in York Northwest workshop.

Accessibility within the Cultural Quarter and the impacts on other areas of the city

An important consideration for the Cultural Quarter is how access to it and other parts of the city can be maintained or improved in the most sustainable way. The eastern boundary of the Quarter skirts the 'Footstreets' area and extends into it at High Petergate and Minster Yard. Following the receipt of a petition to extend the Footstreets into Fossgate, work to investigate possible extensions to the Footstreets was initiated by the council. However, it became apparent that this review needed to be far more extensive to consider access to and within the city centre and its effects on economic viability in the future, as part of the Area Action Plan. This review, as part of 'the City Centre Accessibility Masterplan', is to be led by the council's Transport Planning Unit. It will consider the findings of a number of projects including the Footstreets Review, Cycling City Strategy, Coach Parking Strategy, various improvements to main routes into the city and an audit of the 'Gateway Streets', to assess

where road space could be reallocated to promote sustainable transport choices and to improve the experience of visiting and navigating the city centre. It will, ultimately, form part of the evidence base for the AAP.

Following an officer workshop, in July 2008, to consider the issues (see attached) five specific areas to be investigated for accessibility and impacts of access changes, as discrete areas and in combination, were proposed:

- **Gateway Streets** Micklegate / Blossom Street, Fossgate / Walmgate, Goodramgate, Piccadilly, Stonebow / Peasholme Green and Bootham / Gillygate
- **Other potential Shopping Streets** Museum Street, Lendal, Duncombe Place, High Petergate and Castlegate
- **Cultural Quarter** St Leonard's Place, Ouse Bridge and Leeman Road
- **Castle Piccadilly** Piccadilly, Castlegate, Coppergate/Pavement and Clifford Street/Tower Street
- **York Central/York Northwest** (subject of separate Area Action Plan)

These investigations are expected to commence early in the New Year, with an anticipated completion date of July 2009, so as to keep on-track with the AAP timetable. Initially this work is due to be undertaken by officers, but may require the use of additional resource (i.e. external consultants) in order to complete it within the timescale available.

Next Steps

The immediate next steps in producing the AAP include:

- Report to LDF Working Group in January 2009 with information on the Issues and Options consultation and the comments received.
- Report to LDF Working Group again in March 2009 with recommendations on which options should be the Preferred Options with an analysis of the consultation findings, justification for any options not being progressed, the conclusions of the Sustainability Statement and any emerging evidence.
- We will also begin commissioning and undertaking a range of evidence base documents to support the AAP, with input from Yorkshire Forward.
- Form a Steering Group, which could include community input.
- Commence Accessibility studies.
- Undertake ongoing Stakeholder involvement.

Enhancing the public realm is key to much of the AAP and the idea has generated a high level of support from the public consultation. At the next stage of the plan we will undertake a quality audit of the City Centre public realm, from which the AAP will develop a series of area specific 'Public Realm Key Principles' or guidelines. Once adopted the AAP will act as the design brief for detailed design commissions.

There is no set date for the Preferred Options consultation, however we are aiming for September 2009. For Cultural Quarter public realm and development proposals to be consulted on as part of this process, we will need to have the broad concept and principals, with sketch illustrations, by Summer 2009.

The publication of and consultation on the Submission AAP is timetabled for February 2010. The document will be Submitted in May 2010, the Examination in June 2010. The aim to have the AAP Adopted by the Council in December 2010. The timetable is set in the Council's adopted Local Development Scheme.

The AAP and the Cultural Quarter

The key issue for the AAP in relation to the Cultural Quarter is the need to co-ordinate the public realm masterplanning of the wider city centre with the proposals for the public realm in the Cultural Quarter. For the AAP we intend to undertake a comprehensive public realm audit to assess the current condition of the public realm and to identify opportunities for enhancement. The findings will form the basis of the Preferred Options consultation. A public realm masterplan for the city centre will be produced for the submission AAP.

It is important that the agreed objectives for the Cultural Quarter are imbedded in both the City Centre AAP and the York Northwest AAP. This will ensure that the proposals are co-ordinated with the plans for the wider area.

The AAP Issues and Options also consulted on how to grow and diversify York's Cultural offer as well as the evening economy, including later opening of museums and galleries. There was support for these options including providing additional facilities for cultural activities.

It is important for funding of the Cultural Quarter, that the proposals can be shown to be consistent with, and part of, an adopted statutory plan for the city. If the proposals, costs and partners were set out in the Delivery Strategies for both AAPs, this would create the potential for funding to be drawn from developer contributions, linked to policies in the AAPs, and highlight opportunities for other partner contributions and grant funding avenues.

Wendy Taylor and Ewan Taylor
City Development, City Strategy

Ian Stokes
Transport Planning, City Strategy