

Extract from the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2008
Discussion on the Vision Document

Members were then given a presentation of the 'Vision' document and updated on the processes that had taken place and the following were some of the points raised:

Brief and Definition

Members were informed that the area between the National Railway Museum and the Minster had been chosen as it was an area which Sir Ron Cooke, former Vice Chancellor of the University of York, had noted as unique in Europe for containing buildings of all ages and in particular a large number of Grade 1 and 1* listed buildings.

It was proposed that the cultural quarter would be a vibrant, clearly defined area that any customer/user would be aware they had entered. The aim of the vision was to generate additional external funding than that which was currently achieved through an ad-hoc approach, to ensure that the whole quarter would benefit from investment.

Study Area – NRM and South of the river

It was pointed out that the proposed study area was a surprisingly green space - however it was not easy to move around. The walk from the National Railway Museum to the Minster took 9 minutes and the first task was to obtain more clear connectivity between these two points. Reference was made to redevelopment plans for York Station and the proposal to open both sides of the station. It was pointed out that the majority of coaches dropped visitors adjacent to the Memorial Gardens and that there was no easy direct access to the river at this point. It had been pointed out that the city made poor use of the river frontage and that work was required to improve this area.

Officers pointed out that as part of the York Central plan consideration had been given to the provision of a central plaza – between the two halls of the National Railway Museum; Officers confirmed that a lighting strategy had been proposed which would assist navigation around the proposed routes.

Study Area - St Mary's Abbey Precinct Gardens

The proposals for these Gardens included seeking to open up access to the Art Gallery and the Library from rear entrances in the Museum Gardens and suggesting how people could move through this space. Research with visitors had indicated that Scarborough Bridge and Marble Arch were unsatisfactory routes and suggestions from the original consultants had included the provision of a new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the river from the National Railway Museum/Station into the Museum Gardens. The proposals were intended to cover both daytime and evenings, and would involve reviewing the evening opening of the Gardens.

Officers referred to work that could be undertaken on trees in the Museum Gardens to lift the crowns to restore the view across the river to the Yorkshire Museum.

Study Area – St Leonard’s, Art Gallery and Exhibition Square

There were proposals to alter the traffic which at present used St Leonard’s Place, the first phase involved reducing traffic to 1 lane each way and the second phase closing the road to all traffic except buses, cyclists and taxis. In the timescales of this development traffic would be much reduced in this area. St Leonard’s Place was owned by a private developer who was considering mixed use of Hotel, retail and residential. The new Visitor Information Centre would be located across the road at the corner of Blake Street. In relation to Kings Manor, it was proposed that the existing car park on the frontage could be moved and replaced by a formal garden and Exhibition Square replaced by civic space. There were also proposals for the Theatre Royal to link into De Grey House, thereby improving Theatre facilities; Reference was made to air quality issues in Museum Street and Exhibition Square from queuing traffic and bus manoeuvres.

Study Area – The Library, St Leonard’s Hospital, Multangular Tower

The railings around St Leonard’s Hospital meant that there was restricted space for pedestrian traffic and bus queues. The York Library was a magnificent building but in an inappropriate setting and it was thought that this could be turned into civic space. Internally in the Library there were already plans to make much better use of its relationship with its outdoor space. There were some tentative plans to redevelop St Leonard’s Hospital site as a new retail and workshop space.

Study Area - The Minster

It was pointed out that at present Duncombe Place at the front of the Minster provided a taxi turning circle, improvements had been suggested but vehicular access needed to be considered. There were some south entrance plans for a plaza already in progress and there was a need to build in consideration of the setting of the West end of the Minster and access to Deans Park.

Study Area – River Corridor

It was pointed out that no seats had been provided on the south bank of the river between Lendal and Scarborough Bridges;
Any works on the river frontage should take account of flooding e.g. easily washed down seating;
There was also a need to tackle the geese problem.

It was confirmed that this was a long term vision, possibly 15 years, in which to obtain the funding and for all the proposals to be completed