

‘Cultural Quarter’ – Interim Report

Background

1. This topic was originally registered in early 2008 by Councillor Hogg to examine the ‘Vision’ developed in 2007 for a Cultural Quarter for York, linking the city centre with development sites in York North West. He suggested using the 2007 ‘Vision’ document to explore the relationship between the six areas of the quarter (area 1 to include the Railway Station), including pedestrian and vehicular movement, design, open spaces, a river crossing, performance areas, lighting, landscaping, cultural production, promotion and public art.
2. The aim of the vision is to generate substantially more external funding than that which is currently being achieved through an ad-hoc approach. The ‘Vision’ recognises that getting the link between the city centre and York North West right, will support and guide future city centre development.
3. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Scrutiny Management Team recognised certain key objectives and the following remit was agreed:

Aim

4. To contribute towards achieving a long-term direction for the area between the National Railway Museum (NRM), York Railway Station and the Minster, and to consider any positive and/or adverse effects on the city in doing so.

Objectives

- i. To understand the Council’s strategic approach, and that of its key partners, to the cultural design for the area.
- ii. To contribute to a business plan for achieving the required funding for developing the area into a ‘Cultural Quarter’
- iii. To develop and establish some key principles for guiding a collaborative approach to cultural development in the future, including connectivity to other areas of the city
- iv. To understand the implications for the whole city in terms of retail, its economy and other cultural or leisure based events within the city.

Consultation

5. This review, has so far, been carried out in consultation with the following:
 - Head of Arts and Culture at City of York Council
 - External Relations Manager at Visit York
 - The Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Business Development at the York Museums Trust
 - Officers and Elected Members at Gateshead Council
 - Officers at Newcastle City Council
 - York Theatre Royal
 - Head of Libraries & Heritage – City of York Council
 - Representatives of the National Railway Museum
 - Dean of York Minster
 - Representatives of York St John University
 - Representative of Rushbond PLC

Information Gathered

6. At the last formal meeting Members agreed to investigate some other Cultural Quarters and provide feedback on their findings. Each Member researched a different city and reported back to the Committee. The findings are set out below:

7. Belfast

- Celebrate Belfast was launched in October 2005 and was a 15 month programme of events and activities centred on the 4 programme themes namely City Hall Centenary, Festivals, Cultural Quarters and Sporting Activities. The aim of the Celebrate Belfast Programme was to help stimulate economic activity and contribute to the cultural life in Belfast through increased arts activity, increased tourism and economic activity, increased community activity and a change in the perception of Belfast as a place to live and visit. Belfast City Council commissioned an independent evaluation of the programme and the report leading from this outlined the key achievements, additional outcomes, legacy and future focus. (The Executive Summary of this report was attached as annex C to the agenda for the last formal meeting on 17.09.2008)

8. Analysis

- The drivers behind the projects in Belfast were the promotion of festivals and drawing attention to different areas of the city.
- The need for a robust plan & agreed funding sources.
- Glasgow had put itself on the map with the Garden Festival in 1998, European City of Culture Status in 1990 and the annual Merchant City Festival.

9. Wolverhampton

- Wolverhampton's Cultural Quarter was located in an area that already held most of the city's existing cultural assets including the Art Gallery, Arena

Theatre, Light House Media Centre and Grand Theatre. There were also a number of vacant premises suitable for conversion to cultural usage.

- Wolverhampton appeared to have a vibrant night time economy based predominantly around bars and clubs appealing mainly to the 18-30 age group

10. Analysis

- In light of the comment above a key objective for the city had been to broaden the appeal of the facilities for other age groups.
- Consultation had taken place with residents and there was a Local area and Neighbourhood Arrangements (LANA) Coordinator who liaised directly with city centre residents.
- When asked if they would do anything differently should they have the chance to start again they responded that they would secure longer term funding.

11. Bolton

- Bolton did not had a defined Cultural Quarter but had a 5 year tourism development plan which sets out the vision for tourism in the area. In order to be effective and successful Bolton Council would be working with key strategic partners who impact on tourism.

12. Analysis

- Bolton promoted itself as being part of Greater Manchester with good transport links and good access to the countryside.
- Members thought that the drivers behind the development plan were economic.

13. Leicester

- The Cultural Quarter in Leicester was still being developed and was part of the regeneration of the St George's Area of the city. Major cultural projects included a performing arts centre (due to open in December 2008), a three screen digital media centre (construction scheduled to be completed by July 2009) and a depot providing workspace for the city's designers, artists and other creative businesses (now operational).

14. Analysis

- It was too early to measure any success factors as most of the projects were still in progress.
- An elected Member who had recently visited the city reported that it had improved both visually and with the introduction of pedestrian streets with strategically angled seating providing vistas along the streets.

15. Doncaster

- Plans for a Cultural & Civic Quarter had originally been drawn up in the 1950's and had recently been resurrected as part of the town's urban renaissance master plan. The objectives behind it were to diversify the economy promoting cultural industries initiatives, creating a tourism interest, reducing reliance on drinking culture, promote better urban design with new housing, build new performance spaces, a new cinema, swimming pool and council offices and releasing existing council buildings for other uses.

16. Analysis

- Representatives of Doncaster Council had initially been unfamiliar with the tendering process and the competitive dialogue that ensued. They had since learned the importance of defining better and earlier the specification to give to the private sector.

17. General Analysis arising from the discussions of the above

- Most of the cities investigated had been hit by economic decline and the creation of a 'Cultural Quarter' had, in most cases, been part of greater regeneration project.
- It was too early to draw conclusions from most of the cities investigated, as their 'Cultural Quarter' had not been in existence for long enough.
- Was York's challenge one of regeneration or preservation of its existing heritage?

Issues Arising

18. Following on from the above discussions Members highlighted the following issues arising in relation to the 'Cultural Quarter' in York:

- There were many events in York that did not get publicised.
- Funding was of the utmost importance.
- Stakeholder institutions in York had major development plans and funding would need to be requested in the proper context.
- There was a possibility that because York had a reasonably thriving and stable economy there may be problems in terms of attracting funding.
- The fact that 'York Central' site was within the boundaries of the Cultural Quarter could be a strong factor in attracting funding.
- Those involved in the creative industries in York should be involved in the planning process and execution of ideas rather than bringing in people from outside. Examples of this would be the use of the specialist creative industries such as stonemasons and glaziers.
- Members recognised there could be potential problems with branding part of the City as a 'Cultural Quarter.'
- Discussions were had regarding the use of the term 'cultural' and the need to differentiate between the concept of the Cultural Quarter and how to refer to it generally. In this context 'cultural' was used as a term people were familiar with.

- The External Relations Manger from Visit York reported that the Board had met recently to discuss aspects of Visit York's work programme and had discussed the Cultural Quarter. He said that not all Board Members had been happy with the term. However the strength of the concept of a 'Cultural Quarter' in order to attract funding was recognised as being important.

19. The following issues were raised at a previous formal meeting and are included here for reference:

- A Cultural Quarter was not a re-branding exercise but the chance to regenerate an area and an opportunity for York to attract finance to support it
- There may be difficulties sustaining the evening economy around the NRM area
- If the proposals went ahead the evening culture in York may shift
- The Authority would need to have a leadership role to provide links between the areas and partners to ensure funding was sought for the benefit of the Cultural Quarter as a whole
- There was a need to encourage visitors to return to the city and stay longer and get the correct balance between residents and visitors
- There was a need to be sensitive to other strong cultural offers¹ outside the proposed Cultural Quarter i.e. Castle Museum, Micklegate, Gillygate, Clifford's Tower, Walmgate
- Poor use of the river frontage (for example: lack of access to the river from Museum Gardens, lack of seating, lack of events and activities using the river or river front)
- Improvements to connectivity between NRM and Minster
- Air Quality issues in Museum Street and Exhibition Square from queuing traffic and bus manoeuvres.
- It was important to source trees, cycle racks, seats etc suitable to the conditions
- Any works on the river frontage should take account of flooding e.g. easily washed down seating.
- There was a need to tackle the problem with geese along the river corridor
- It was important to get the pedestrian hierarchy correct
- Connections between all the areas of the proposed Cultural Quarter needed to be reinforced
- It was important to make the most of York's stunning buildings
- Members should walk around the study areas [paragraphs 24 – 27 of this report refer]
- A public drop in session should be arranged to gauge public views [paragraph 29 & the fact finding timetable refer]

Committee Visit to Gateshead Council and Newcastle City Council

20. On Tuesday 23rd September 2008 Members of the Committee visited both Gateshead Council and Newcastle City Council. Officers and Elected Members

¹ Other cultural offers being defined, in this context, as being museums, galleries, theatres, historic sites and cultural events outside of the boundary of the proposed Cultural Quarter.

at Gateshead showed the Committee the regeneration work that had been undertaken at Gateshead Quays including the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, the Millennium Bridge and the Sage Gateshead. The tour of Newcastle included visits to the 'Heart of the City', Grainger Town, Waygood Galleries, Theatre Royal and Old Eldon Square.

21. Members were given a copy of the final report for the 'Review of Physical Regeneration - Impact of the Regeneration of Gateshead Quays and links to Gateshead Town Centre'. The report sets out the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Gateshead Council on the regeneration of Gateshead Quays and Town Centre including the impact that the physical regeneration has had on Gateshead, the vision for the future role of Gateshead Town Centre, Separation & Connectivity issues, Transport & Accessibility and Engaging & Connecting with Local Communities. The report is attached as Annex A.
22. A schedule of best practice examples and some conclusions drawn from Gateshead Council are attached at Annex B and Annex C respectively. These are drawn directly from a document circulated to Members of the Committee entitled 'Passionate about Gateshead Quays: The Transformation'.

Issues arising from this visit

23. During the visit the following issues and points were raised:

- The drivers for both Gateshead Council and Newcastle City Council were very different from those in York.
- The main aim in Gateshead was felt to be regeneration of the riverside to form Gateshead Quays and apart from the York Central Site there was little regeneration land within the proposed boundaries of the 'Cultural Quarter' in York.
- It was important to have a solid plan before applying and sourcing funding.
- Gateshead now has one new iconic building (Sage Gateshead) and another iconic building in the conversion of an old flour mill into the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art. York already has several iconic buildings.
- Neither Council called the areas 'Cultural Quarters'. Members visited areas named Gateshead Quays and Grainger Town.
- Both Gateshead and Newcastle were part of a coherent plan of development and were not a re-branding exercise.
- It was an Arts and Culture led regeneration and the substantial public investment had drawn in substantial private investment.
- Newcastle City Council wished to enhance heritage features to introduce buffers between nighttime drinking areas of the city.
- Some of the drivers were similar to York's and some were different:

Similar

- Building a nighttime economy not based on drinking.
- To improve connectivity, reducing the reliance on motor vehicles.
- Opening cultural aspects of the Universities to the public.

Different

- New sporting facilities for Gateshead
 - New cultural icons: Angel of the North, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Sage Gateshead.
 - To improve Gateshead's town centre which was mainly owned by a private pensions trust.
 - To increase city centre housing in Newcastle via 'Living over the Shop'.
 - To create a new business area in Gateshead
- Citizens were engaged via residents' panels, business panels and by representation of the Board of the company set up by the two Councils to deliver the regeneration.
 - The regeneration is deemed to be hugely successful in raising the profile of Gateshead, improving quality of life in both areas, drawing in private investment, raising visitor numbers & spending and in job creation.
 - Work was ongoing in relation to tackling the traffic problems, signage and policing and stewarding of drinkers.

Committee visit to Stakeholders

24. Members visited stakeholders in York on 15th October 2008 to discuss their part in the proposals for the Cultural Quarter. Representatives of the York Museums Trust, York Theatre Royal, York Library, Rushbond PLC, the National Railway Museum (NRM), York Minster and York St John University shared their plans for the future with Members. A summary of timings and costs for their future plans are attached at Annex D to this report.
25. York St John University does not currently lie within the boundary of the proposed Cultural Quarter. Discussions were had with the University regarding whether the boundaries could be changed to include them. A summary of timings and costs for their future plans is attached at Annex E to this report.
26. Several of the stakeholders have submitted further information stemming from the discussions had during Members' visit on 15th October 2008. The additional information is included at Annex F to this report.

Issues arising from this visit

27. During this visit the following issues were raised:
 - How the various organisations would source their funding
 - The importance of all organisations speaking with one voice
 - The idea for a pedestrianised Leeman Road and a bridge over the river are key to the re-invention of York in the 21st century as part of a city-centre wide offer that sweeps across from the Minster, through Exhibition Square to Museum Gardens, across the river and up through York North West.
 - As with other elements of the Cultural Quarter, NRM's institutional vision can only contribute to an holistic re-development of York if all

those elements of the public realm, which currently lie with the City Council, join them together.

- More information was needed in relation to the re-routing of traffic away from Leeman Road and the form of public transport to be offered.
- Whether the present Cultural Quarter boundaries should be expanded to include York St John University.

Draft Business Plan

28. During this meeting Members will be presented with a draft business plan for consideration. The plan looks at the fact that while the cultural institutions within the proposed area are nationally and internationally renowned they are also characterised by under investment in the estate. All of the institutions within the proposed Cultural Quarter are in the process of embarking upon major redevelopments and it is important that these have reference to the overall context of the city centre and its connectivity with the York North West developments. The draft business plan is attached as Annex G to this report.

Fact Finding Timetable

29. In order to assist Members of the Committee with their understanding of the 'Vision' document and proposed Cultural Quarter, and to progress the review, Members have agreed the following fact finding timetable. Amendments have been made to the venue of the planned public drop in session on 4th November 2008 and dates to consider the draft final report and submit the final report to the Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) have been added.

Date	Event	Findings
21.07.2008 to 17.09.2008 [Complete]	Members to individually look at specified Cultural Quarters.	The findings of this exercise were presented at the formal meeting held on 17.09.2008. A summary of these and the issues arising are set out in paragraphs 6-18 of this report.
15.08.2008 [Complete]	Visit to St Mary's Precinct, the Museum Gardens and City Art Gallery.	Members of the Committee were given a guided tour of this area. The Chief Executive and the Director of Finance & Business Development of the York Museums Trust informed Members of some of the future plans for the area. The Master Plan for this area will be presented as part of the Council's Draft Business Plan at the meeting scheduled for 29.10.2008.

23.09.2008 [Complete]	Visit to Newcastle/Gateshead	A summary of the findings of this visit and the issues arising are set out in paragraphs 20-23 of this report
15.10.2008 [Complete]	All day tour of the Study Area(s) with stakeholders	A summary of the findings of this visit and the issues arising are set out in paragraphs 24-27 of this report
29.10.2008 [Outstanding]	Formal meeting to receive the Council's Draft Business Plan and discuss this in relation to key objectives (ii) and (iv)	The Draft Business Plan is attached at Annex G to this report
04.11.2008 [Outstanding]	Public drop in session	This event will now be held in York Minster between 4pm and 7pm Stakeholders will be invited to attend and provide plans/models of their proposals. Officers will also be available to answer questions.

Timetable for preparation of the draft final report

30. After the public drop in session Members may decide that they wish to meet again to discuss the findings from the drop in session and also, if they feel they have gathered enough evidence, to formulate some appropriate recommendations for inclusion in the draft final report. The following timetable is suggested.

Date	Event
TBC	Consider the evidence gathered at the public drop in session and to formulate recommendations for the draft final report
16.12.2008	Consider Draft Final Report
January 2009	Submit the final report to SMC

Other

31. At the meeting on 17.09.2008 Members also agreed to defer inviting a representative from another Local Authority to speak to them until after they had visited Newcastle/Gateshead.

32. Members have now received copies of Simon Roodhouse's book 'Cultural Quarters – Practices & Principles'.

Options

33. Having regard to the aims and objectives of this topic remit, and having considered the information provided in this report Members may choose to:

- i. Agree the fact-finding timetable as set out in paragraph 29 of this report or amend it if further information is required.
- ii. If Members feel that they have enough evidence then to agree and/or amend the timetable for the preparation of the draft final report (paragraph 30 of this report refers)
- iii. Arrange a date for inviting a representative from another Local Authority to speak to them.

Implications

34. **Human Resources (HR)** – The Head of Arts & Culture is already leading on this within her service and has indicated that this review would only incur minimal additional admin work, which could be retained within her team.

35. **Legal** – There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

36. **Financial** – There are minimal funds available within the scrutiny budget for research relating to ongoing reviews, therefore there are no financial implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

37. There are no Equalities, Property, Crime & Disorder, or other implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Corporate Strategy – Priorities & Direction

38. This review relates to the following corporate priority for improvement of this Council:

'Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the City's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces.'

Risk Management

39. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, there are no known risks associated with the recommendations of this report other than the focus of the review and the progress of the Scrutiny work plan would be adversely affected if the review did not keep within the agreed timescale.

Recommendations

40. It is recommended that Members consider:

- i. Whether they require further information and if so to amend the fact finding timetable as set out in paragraph 29 of this report
- ii. If Members decide that they have all the evidence they need then to approve the timetable for preparing the draft final report as set out in paragraph 30 of this report.
- iii. Whether they would like to invite a representative of another Local Authority to address them and if so from which Local Authority.

Reason: To ensure the progression of this review and compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

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**Interim Report
Approved**

Date 20.10.08

Wards Affected: Guildhall, Holgate & Micklegate

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

- Belfast City Council Evaluation of Celebrate Belfast 2006 – Final Report – Draft Version 2 – April 2007. The full document is available at www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events/docs/CelebrateBelfastReport.doc
- Passionate about Gateshead Quays: The Transformation (Gateshead Council 2006)

Annexes

Annex A – Report of the Sustainable Communities – Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee at Gateshead Council

Annex B – Schedule of best Practice Examples (Extract from Passionate about Gateshead Quays: The Transformation’.)

Annex C – Conclusions (Extract from Passionate about Gateshead Quays: The Transformation’.)

Annex D – Timescales and Costs for organisations within the Cultural Quarter

Annex E – Timescales and Costs for York St John University (for possible inclusion in the Cultural Quarter)

Annex F – Further comments from organisations within the Cultural Quarter

Annex G – Draft Business Plan