

York Minster

The Dean and Chapter see the planned improvements to access at the South Transept as improving the Minster's links and attachment to the city - essentially as a Gateway linking the church to the urban landscape. Moreover they see the Minster as providing not merely an important attraction but having a pivotal role in the economy of York - providing jobs and the opportunity for the development of important skills in many areas of preservation, development, interpretation and culture.

There are a number of improvements to the access planned at the Minster as part of their new South entrance. The most obvious of these are the new set of steps with improved access for wheelchair users; in a vesica shape - steps encircled on two sides by a ramp in stone. The ticket desks will move out of the Minster's South Transept into two shops in Minster Gates as the public approach the cathedral and the ticket will then be checked in the Minster itself. There will also be a box-office facility available at the Minster too.

There will be a temporary entrance at the West end of the Minster during construction in 2009 - seen as less efficient but essential if works are to be progress to schedule. Part of this work will be to improve disabled access to the Undercroft - the area below the central crossing created by the programme to stabilise the central tower in the late 1960s and providing public access to the Treasury, and the foundations of the present building and earlier cathedral too.

The present programme of work to restore the glass and stone of the East Window is progressing and while the glass is out for repair a colour representation printed by Hewlett Packard will be hung in its place. While the window is being worked upon by the Glaziers' Trust there will be an opportunity to see the glaziers at work in Bedern via live screens in the Minster. A similar facility will explain the role of the masons and stonecarvers who work in the Minster Stoneyard in preserving the 800-year old cathedral.

The detail of the Minster's development programme is contained in a six-volume bid to the Heritage National Lottery Fund which centres on the themes of tourism enhancement through improved communication and interpretation and improved access to the building - particularly for those with a mobility disability.

The King's Manor

The King's Manor has a large and growing archaeological department and a medieval studies department – thus there is a footfall of some 400-500 students, academic and other staff in the building. There is no major expenditure or change of occupancy planned at the King's Manor in the immediate or medium-term future (i.e. to 2015) so therefore no significant costs over and above maintenance and some internal changes of use.

There is sympathy from the King's Manor users for a throughway that is tempered by anxieties on the part of their Security Dept about safety of users and property: petty theft is a significant problem, as is small-scale vandalism and occasionally other crimes. While security is an issue – e.g. the lane between King's Manor and the 1-9 St Leonard's Place building – this is an important opportunity for a more visible through-route to the Museum Gardens and the city centre and the idea of a mutual security operation with all interested parties (City of York Council, York Museums' Trust, York Theatre Royal and Rushbond) about the security implications of opening up routes in the St. Mary's Abbey Precinct is being discussed. There is a need to balance security with the long-standing desire for through-routes and with an assumption that satisfactory solutions can be found to secure them.

York Museums' Trust - York Art Gallery

The overall objective which York Museums' Trust has set for the Art Gallery is to realise the potential of unused spaces in the building and improve access to the collection of Designated fine and decorative art collections that are currently not on public display. The plan is to open more of it to view, involvement and enjoyment and physically connect the Gallery with the Abbey Precinct.

The project is to expand the Art Gallery into the space currently occupied by the City Archives, provide space for new galleries and particularly create a new mezzanine gallery above the existing main gallery. At the rear of the building there is a desire to extend the Gallery into the gardens and create a new entrance, provide a new entrance to the Precinct, linking with new pathways and a 'green' route. The extended space will provide accommodation for more displays and exhibitions including a contemporary programme as well as an improved cafe, shop, learning suite, storage, art library and toilets.

York Art Gallery, with a new rear entrance, will therefore become an integral part of St. Mary's Abbey Precinct with Exhibition Square being developed as an event space for the city.

In terms of timescale, the Museums' Trust will seek funding to develop the plan for York Art Gallery from a range of possible funders including Arts Council England in 2008-9 and secure funding from 2010. Arts Council England, for example, is committed to increasing funding to the visual arts across the country. The plan is to start the capital project in 2012 and complete in 2013.

York Theatre Royal

York Theatre Royal is working with York Conservation Trust on extensive plans for the development and expansion not only of its existing premises, but also into de Grey House and the de Grey Rooms - while they are already using the building to some extent, more space will become available when the relocation of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) takes place in 2009.

It is proposed that there should be a connecting building between the Theatre and de Grey House which will need to pay due respect to the importance of the existing theatre foyer. To make this connection possible, discussions are underway with NEDL to explore some of the difficulties presented by the electricity substation in the basement of de Grey House and the proposed relocation and upgrade.

York Theatre Royal has continuously evolved in response to the changing needs of audiences and the community with developments in recent years focussing increasingly on children, families and young people. Within the last 8 years the Theatre Royal has developed a new studio space to accommodate youth and community productions, created a vibrant youth theatre group for young people from 5 to 25, introduced a programme of theatre productions aimed specifically at children, and have initiated an extensive partnership with schools to support creative learning across all areas of the curriculum.

A good example of the Theatre working in collaboration with York's many cultural attractions and communities was the highly-acclaimed production of The Railway Children, staged at the National Railway Museum which played to over 20,000 people in the summer of 2008.

In addition to a striking new link building providing a single entrance to the theatre complex, the development will refurbish the de Grey Rooms (currently inaccessible to the public), creating new flexible rehearsal and performance space. This will provide facilities for better programme of activity with schools, enlarge the foyer to bring significant improvements for audiences front-of-house and allow the cafe bar area to move forward and providing the possible opportunity to glaze in the colonnade and move out on to the pavement should changes to the current level of vehicle traffic use take place.

Rushbond plc: 1-9 St. Leonard's Place

Rushbond plc acquired 1-9 St Leonard's Place and 2 / 4 Museum Street from the City of York Council, who continue to occupy the premises pending relocation.

Architects have been instructed to produce an initial scheme design. The scheme concept involves the reconfiguration and re-use of the existing buildings, the clearance of the low quality extension buildings and the development of a new building alongside. The new building element would offer an opportunity for an exciting new contemporary form of architecture to complement the refurbished historic buildings.

A mixed use development is envisaged to include a high-quality luxury hotel together with restaurant, retail and office space as well as residential (town houses and apartments) uses with associated car parking. This would be a significant development which would represent a major private-sector led investment into the Cultural Quarter. It would add to the diversity of uses in this area and extend the hours of operation of the buildings into the evening times. A high-quality luxury boutique style hotel would expand the range of hotel accommodation available within the City Walls. Additional restaurants would support and complement nearby attractions including the Art Gallery and Theatre Royal. There is an opportunity to provide space for retailers, particular seeking high-quality and unique accommodation, as well as for office users, seeking a flagship office location. Residential uses can support the overall mix, add to the diversity of the total offer, and provide an appropriate use for this superb array of historic buildings.

A planning application is expected to be submitted in 2009 / 2010 with redevelopment proposed for 2012 onwards.

York Central Library

The ambition is to transform York Central Library into an Explore Centre in partnership with Adult and Community Education in line with the Library Strategy (as detailed in 21st Century Learning : 21st Century Libraries). The plan is to provide 6 Explore Centres across the city - the first opened in Acomb in February 2008 and the second in New Earswick in July 2008.

The transformation is planned in 3 phases:

1. Creation of a suite of learning rooms and transforming the layout of the ground floor including a new cafe. The Library are currently working with the conservation officer and an architect to create a plan for this - taking into account the listed nature of the building. The aim is to demonstrate how the change will increase visitors and issues. Adult and Community Education are planning a series of learning programmes which includes ESOL and Skills for Life. This phase will also include a project with an external funder (which will last for 3 years) - so there will be additional funding coming in. Details of this are currently confidential.

2. A report will go to the Executive by the end of the year with recommendations for the future of the City Archive. One possibility is for a move into the library although this would be dependent on capital investment and possibly a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

3. Major building work to increase space - possibly through the addition of another wing upstairs - and complete the transformation. This phase would need approx £3m-£5m.

York Museums' Trust: Museum Gardens, the Hospitium, St Mary's Abbey Precinct, York Art Gallery

At present the buildings in St Mary's Abbey Precinct are disconnected, standing in isolation from one another with little interpretation of the buildings, landscape, trees and plants. Physical access to the site is limited and impossible in part for people with mobility difficulties and visitor facilities are poor or non-existent. A large section of land behind York Art Gallery is physically inaccessible. The connection with the river is restricted owing to heavy tree canopy growth and large parts of the gardens are underused.

Visitors are currently unable to appreciate the 2000 years of history that is represented in the Precinct, its importance to the history of the city nor the role that it plays in the history of the country. There are many themes that could be developed that are currently unrealised - the Roman period, the mediaeval abbey and its community, the history of York, plants and trees, garden design and architecture are some of the themes which can be explored and interpreted.

In a wider context, the Precinct sits at the very heart of the city, including the National Railway Museum, the King's Manor, St Leonard's Place and Exhibition Square leading through to Dean's Park and York Minster. Within the Precinct itself the Yorkshire Museum is ideally placed to interpret the city's history as well as that of the region and the country through the collections and the built environment around it. While on a map the area of the Precinct can be clearly defined, on the ground form does not follow function and the various cultural institutions are seen as remote from one another - the meaning of the landscape is hard to understand and while there are fine views to be glimpsed, there is currently no overall sense of meaning to the landscape.

The ambition for the Precinct is to improve the urban realm and establish its identity and connectivity. This has evolved and developed through discussions within the Steering Group which include York Museums Trust, the University of York, St. Olave's Church, City of York Council and English Heritage with the two main stakeholders being the University and the Council. The involvement and support of the University of York is especially important because the King's Manor is situated within the Abbey Precinct.

The development of St Mary's Abbey Precinct is planned to take place in Four Phases:

Phase 1 - The Hospitium

Phase 2 - Reinventing the Yorkshire Museum

Phase 3 - The Museum Gardens

Phase 4 - York Art Gallery

These will need to develop concurrently between 2007 and 2013.

The work to develop the Hospitium is already complete - it is the centre for York Museum Trust's Conference and Corporate Business. The income it provides will help towards the economic sustainability of the Trust and future investment in the development of St Mary's Abbey Precinct. Development of the building included installing a lift and internal stairs to the first floor, soundproofing, toilets, kitchens and offices. The project was completed in April 2008 and on budget of £450k.

Phase 2, work to refurbish the Yorkshire Museum is scheduled to take place between 2009 and 2010 and aims to realise the museum's full potential from its collections of scientific specimens and archaeological artefacts in a manner which will challenge, excite and inspire with a special focus on the Roman and Mediaeval periods. The Museum was established in 1830 and attracts 180,000 local residents each year as well as 70,000 visitors to the city. The ambition is to attract 200,000 visitors from a range of audiences to explore new galleries covering the city's Roman, Mediaeval and Pre-historic periods and an audio-visual presentation on the History of York in the Tempest Anderson Hall.

The development of the Museum Gardens in Phase 3 will seek to create a botanical garden offering opportunities for learning, enjoyment and involvement in a safe and attractive space in the heart of the city. The project will develop the garden which will extend from the historic Museum Gardens through to land behind York Art Gallery providing new gardens and public spaces. New pathways and green spaces and routes will be created with the gardens enhanced with new planting and interpretation with views re-established. An events programme will involve local people through an active volunteers scheme while events in the gardens will engage new audiences. The volunteers programme will be established in 2008 and consult local people in order to develop ideas and aspirations for the garden. A gardens manager has already been appointed to lead the project. Resources will be sought in 2009-2010 and the capital project is scheduled to begin in 2011.

Phase 4 seeks to develop the Art Gallery (more detail under the separate Art Gallery section) in such a way as to realise the potential of unused spaces and the Designated fine and decorative art collections that are not currently on display within York Art Gallery. The objective is to open more up for public display, involvement and enjoyment and physically connect the gallery with the Precinct. There are plans to expand the Gallery into the space currently occupied by the City Archives, creating a new mezzanine gallery above the existing main gallery. There are plans to extend the Gallery into the gardens, create a new rear entrance linked to pathways and a new green route. This extra space will provide more displays and exhibitions including an improved cafe, shop, learning suite, art library and toilets. Exhibition Square is to be developed as an event space.

Resources will be sought from the Arts Council England amongst others in 2008-9 and secured from 2010. The capital project is planned to start in 2012 and be completed in 2013.