

Annex C: Comments of those attending 3 focused workshops.

Summary of 3 Key Theme Workshops

A total of 48 people attended the workshops and their comments are summarised below:

Key Theme 1: Economic Vitality

Retail

A central shopping area boundary was strongly supported to reflect the Retail Study with most objecting to deleting or including other areas. It was felt primary and secondary shopping areas should be protected. Most felt retail on Castle Piccadilly should only be to the north including both sides of the River Foss. Concerns were expressed about the impact of York NorthWest on the city centre retail offer.

Tourism

Support for the redesign of city centre spaces to upgrade their appearance and install infrastructure to facilitate events as well as rationalise and improve signage to promote key events. Most felt it would be better to use existing buildings for cultural activities such as churches and universities rather than new build. There was strong support for a hotel policy to be developed but mixed support to protect other overnight accommodation, such as guest houses, with the need being for high quality hotels. Some felt it was more important to protect office space than hotels.

Evening Economy

Strong support to pro-actively encourage evening economy through extended opening times of shops, attractions and footstreets supported by an improved pedestrian environment and evening transport. Some felt the cost of staff working later would be prohibitive for small businesses. Noise could be an issue and would need to be considered.

Economy

Many felt the city was too small to create a new office quarter feeling York Central was better for this. There was mixed support to create an office quarter centred around Toft Green/Rougier street as a focus for business activity. It was suggested that Layerthorpe should serve as an office quarter and be included within the city centre boundary.

University

There was strong support to review the physical links between the university campuses and city centre especially for cycling. Some work is being done already by Transport Plans and Studies. Strong support to incorporate creative space to retain students in York and link into the Cultural Quarter and Science City York. Showcase facilities for students could be temporary.

Transport

There was strong support to close or restrict access to certain streets and reduce parking provision with less support for car free development. Reductions in car parking should be considered but not compromise development. Many felt congestion charging should be considered. Improvements to cycle routes were supported and identification of a north south route as reallocation of sections of the inner ring road to prioritise cycles. There should be an adequate number of pedestrian and cycle links. Cycle parking should be scattered throughout the city.

Many wanted improved locations of bus stops and bus routes to maximise accessibility. Lukewarm support to relocate bus stops where they detracted from historic buildings. A city centre shuttle bus was seen as vital. The bus interchange had mixed support as some felt regular buses and more stops were more important. Shared surfaces should be considered at Piccadilly/Parliament/Coppergate.

Strong support for river transport to ease congestion in a sustainable way. Favoured option to reduce the amount and impact of commercial traffic was to change the times of footstreets with some support to condense deliveries through fewer vehicles and a transshipment centre linked in with the Designer Outlet and the A59.

Key Theme 2: Historic Environment

Managing the Historic Environment

The Central Historic Core Conservation Area Character Appraisal is a key evidence base and its completion is important as soon as possible so that design decisions and public realm enhancements can be guided by its findings.

Section 106 contributions should be sought for the public realm.

Managing the Archaeological Resource

ARUP archaeology report should be revisited. Finds should be shown locally.

Designing in the City Centre

Key to good design is an understanding of the context and the relationship between buildings. Design does not preclude contemporary design - should not be pastiche but needs to be more prescriptive than the current system. A combination of current approach, Design Code and the CAA is needed

Need to consider views and vistas, long distance and local as well as consider a maximum height for development across the city centre. What sort of landmarks are we looking for?

Design Decisions

CAAP is a suitable approach to provide advice. Some acknowledged that Members' decisions should be guided by external expert advice and Officers need training in conservation and design.

Improving pedestrian routes

People get lost and do not know how far or close things are. A lack of navigability requires more creative solutions than signposts such as use of landscape or new technology.

Pedestrianised routes need to be related to the foot street and attractive enough to draw people into less used areas.

Need to integrate measures into design to overcome potential conflict of users. The Police want clear footpaths across the city.

Improving the appearance and de-cluttering public spaces

Many spaces can look are inaccessible, e.g. Memorial gardens from the river or Deans Gardens by the gates.

Clifford's Tower/River Foss area could provide a good relaxing area. Access is a key issue – want economic utility with independent trades – can get round transshipment, access control, size of vehicle control.

Many felt there is no need for co-ordination of furniture, lighting etc. throughout the centre – areas have their own distinctiveness already. Need to pay attention to less obvious areas – an analysis of squares should inform decisions. Designate different areas for uses but the areas need to be improved, for example the footstreets lacks areas in which to relax.

Strong support for upgrading squares stating they are not equipped for modern demands. Infrastructure is badly needed. There should not be one dedicated outdoor performance areas – all suitable areas should have infrastructure but at the same time be flexible.

Some felt that Newgate Market is a dark, underused area, with some unmanned stalls, and looks shabby. Market too large for demand, surfaces poor to clean. Pop up style stalls could cater for numbers that arrive, so that there are no empty stalls and they could be concentrated in the same area of the market to make it look full. Could include a dedicated event areas. Need to control traffic, reinvent the market – get a Covent Garden feel. Concerns that market traders would not move – mixed views with some feeling that they would. Strong preference to keep the market in Newgate. Some felt that the market could go in Parliament Street but there are issues with this. Some proposed relocating Newgate market near Clifford's Tower with green areas and benches where the current car park is.

Footstreets

Footstreets are closely linked to parking – how will the city still be accessible? Mixed support for Fossgate with retailers concerned about deliveries – short term loading bay (and servicing if problems do occur). There is a good number of parking spaces in the area – but they need to be open.

Footstreets could open up in evening with chairs and tables continental style. York needs places to meet and relax – need to think what trends will be in 2029 – less shopping (more internet), less car use etc. Museum Street needs

work to enhance it especially at Exhibition Square. The potential conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists needs to be recognised with accessibility for cyclists considered.

Green Spaces

There is a need for children's play space – lots of development near Foss Island could provide this just outside the city centre. There could be a non equipped green area in Castle Piccadilly set aside for children's play. Some poor quality areas which could be enhanced such as areas beside the rivers.

Green spaces are an attraction for all and should be local and near to key attractions.

Accessing green spaces from the walls was not supported as the green space can be accessed from ground level.

A co-ordinated approach requires an urban design project and an urban design master plan for city. Most felt the design and management of the spaces were key to their success and felt this should be done by the council stating ambition and confidence was needed to make radical changes that allow diversity.

Landscapes change with time and the AAP needs to consider what may be needed in 20 years time. Only plant in certain areas and trees need careful management. There was little support for green roofs in a city as many felt it was not in keeping with historic environment.

Riversides

A walkway between the bridges should be a priority. Most supported a walkway but not a continuous one – all agreed better access to rivers was needed and most that it should not be uniform but varied and 'meander' down alleyways which should be made more attractive.

Should encourage green spaces along the frontage of the rivers (flood plains). Upgrade the other side of the river near the Park Inn Hotel.

River Foss

Most felt it was a neglected asset and that walkways should be on both sides. This would need viability assessment. Need to bring the River Foss into city and this could be done via circular walks that link into Hungate and Castle Piccadilly. If activity is increased there it could help to prevent anti social problems. Boats can go 200 yards up to Iron Bridge. Merchant Adventurer stops the walkway and they need to be involved. The findings of the ENVA report should be taken forward.

Managing Flood Risk

Included due to the poor press associated with city flooding but York manages the way it floods quite well. Visit York could help to improve this damaging perception.

There was a low level of support for the flooding options as it was felt that the net affect of adopting measures would be too low.

Key theme 3: Community Life

Provision of community services and facilities in the city centre.

Many felt there were enough facilities without creating more but they need to open for longer and most supported an audit of community services so that gaps could be identified.

Facilities that people felt to be lacking in the city centre included a larger music centre, an arts centre such as Helmsley and Pocklington with a wide range of arts to draw people in, a concert and community hall that could be hired to local groups, children's play area, bowling alley, skating rink, coffee bars at night and a swimming pool.

Ensuring that city centre facilities and services are accessible to all members of the community.

Most present felt adapting existing facilities for a wide target market would be preferred to providing facilities for specific groups which they felt was unfair. Supported needs should have changing facilities etc. in the city centre to compensate for loss of day care centres at Yearsley Bridge etc.

Everyone felt that public transport into the evening was vital especially for elderly people who may not drive or cycle. P&R was great when it operated but stopped far too early in the evening. Some felt a local loop system for local buses instead of bus stations would prevent buses criss crossing the centre but others felt it would involve too many changes for elderly people, buggies etc. Could promote a 'food quarter' from Shambles to Hungate to support locals.

Should services and facilities be provided as part of new development that create additional demand or through S106 agreements to meet local needs?

Low response to question stating it was too technical a question but those that did expressed support to obtain funds through S106 agreements to achieve something better for city as a whole and provide services where they are needed.

How should the AAP provide opportunities to develop cultural and social scenes?

It was felt that new cultural facilities, local skills and traditions should be promoted and places of workshop should also be used to help provide community/social glue.

The co-ordination and promotion of facilities certainly, perhaps by way of an encompassing festival such as the York equivalent of Edinburgh Fringe Festival (which has 500 venues) to co-ordinate activities and venues, further art gallery, dance venue, festivals (food, music, art film etc.). Arts festivals in the city, festival using citywide venues such as Spurriergate, St Michael's Belfray, Barley Hall, as well as specific areas as they do in Covent Garden (e.g. at Parliament Street). Could have outdoor performances in the evenings (i.e. Marrakesh).

Encouraging greater diversity in York's evening economy and appropriate levels of intervention?

Many wanted to keep areas separate so that quiet areas stay quiet and lively areas stay lively. Many felt the City Centre is very relaxed and there was support for promoting the evening economy and pedestrianising Fossgate. Many felt Merchantgate is good for food but there are no coffee bars after 6. p.m. and the Night clubs in York were not well received with many students going to Leeds and Newcastle. There was support for restricting the growth of alcohol dependent activities such as bars/pubs.

Improving the ambience and perception of the city centre in the evening.

Should reintroduce city centre firework display and have a Guy Fawkes festival and more music and dance events generally. The lighting of the city centre at night should be reviewed and improved. Fossgate as a pedestrian area would help.

Need more café culture to encourage families to visit the city centre.

Opportunities to provide a safer and more flexible choice of night-time transport.

There was support to work with transport providers and P&R schemes to provide for people leaving venues such as the theatres, cinema, concerts etc later in the evening. Also supported was working to improve facilities at city centre taxi ranks at night such as more taxis at peak times and taxi wardens. Off-peak buses should stop at intermediate bus stops on the route. No need for them to be express from point to point i.e. stops on Lawrence Street/Hull Road for Grimston bar P&R and buses for students. Stonebow is intimidating at night and should be improved. Bootham taxi rank can be a scene for fights.

Should new housing in the city centre be designed for specific groups such as single people, families, young people, older people?

There was mixed support for housing for a wide range and/or prioritising families and older people but very strong support for housing for local people on low incomes.

Need to have facilities in place before building housing and need to build a mixed community. Cultural areas attractive to older people who want to live in the city where they don't have to travel etc. Single, young and older should be catered for. Families tend to live out of the cities close to schools and safer play areas and better supermarkets, and family housing outside the walls would be better close to Sainsburys and Morrisons to the east supporting the shops in the gateway streets.

Support to keep people living in the city. Cities with fewer people living in them are not as vibrant as York. Balconies and flowers etc, help to make the city look lived in.

How should affordable housing be delivered in the city centre?

Would like to see tenement type housing as in Edinburgh or the houses in the new town of Edinburgh i.e. flats at the basement and top floor end and family

homes in the middle 2 floors with a communal garden area though perhaps not right for York.

There was support for reducing the affordable housing threshold further than currently applied (15 units/0.3 ha) for the city centre and also for targeting different methods (above the shops, using empty homes etc) with low support to consider specific areas for housing renewal although Walmgate and Groves area could be regenerated.

Existing problems with investors and 2nd home owners buying up flats. Providing homes above shops would be useful, but would be difficult to implement in practice (e.g. no room for cars/noise issues in some areas/shop owners don't want to relinquish storage rooms etc.) Need to provide the right balance of homes in the city centre so that people can stay there throughout their lives – this would help build community spirit. Everyone recognised the need for affordable housing.

Opportunity Areas: Summary of comments from all 3 Workshops

All 3 workshops discussed the opportunity areas and the boundary and the responses are summarised below.

1. Cultural Quarter

Issues to address:

Homeless/beggars in NRM subway, Marble Arch area and Museum Gardens puts people off using those areas especially at night.

Too many cars driving too fast when footstreet times end.

Coordination of bus stops near the railway station are confusing with a poor layout.

Need to reduce traffic at St Leonard's Place which already suffers from poor air quality.

Museum feels isolated from the city centre.

Ideas to address issues:

Balance between disabled driver' needs but retain some areas (Fossgate for example) that are completely free of traffic.

Open up gardens and green spaces by the riverside

Join green spaces where possible. Need areas of quiet to get away from traffic.

Need production/workspaces for artists to use.

Improvements need to remember 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.

Though the area would benefit from enhancement and co-ordination, this should not be to detriment of the city as a place of work. City centre is primarily a place for citizens and should not be an excessively sanitised museum.

Critical to address severance effects of St Leonard's Place.

Area of Cultural Quarter

Include Gillygate, station, British Rail building, access from station. YNW and CC plans need to link together in a more coherent way as very different areas at present. Boundary should incorporate railway station, new hotel and Blossom Street.

Boundary should include the front of Station as well. Include North Street Gardens, York St Johns University and Duncombe Place.

Name

The name 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.

Term Cultural Quarter is not suitable - what is the definition of Culture?

The implied elitism of Cultural and geographical isolation of quarter would need to be overcome by a strong brand and clear communication strategy.

2. Castle Piccadilly

Issues to address:

This area is an eyesore and should be a priority for redevelopment as it could be an exemplar site and make more of the views from this area, many of which are obliterated now. Car park does not respect historic setting of the Castle area.

View from Castlegate towards the Tower is key – is blocked by a tree.

Views out as important as views in and these have not been respected in the past.

Piccadilly needs better linkages for it to work and make more use of the rivers and footpath from Piccadilly.

Medium stay car parking needs addressing if Castle Car park closes.

Ideas for improvement:

Concentrate on area east of the River Foss, (Piccadilly) where the old run down buildings are and join this area to the back end of Coppergate.

No shops on the car park site, should be kept for several vibrant uses. Public open space by the river with grass and benches, children's play area adjacent, market stalls relocated from Newgate, This would add to the vitality of the area. Hard standing for occasional performances.

Does York need large shopping units? York is famous for its small niche and quirky shops and we should celebrate them more and use them as a retail anchor.

Retail should be at the top end of Piccadilly i.e. closely knit to the existing shopping area and not stretching in a linear way down Piccadilly. Area should incorporate area to east of Piccadilly. Conclude retail area at Ryedale building which should be demolished and opened up as more public space.

Retail on the Piccadilly side with lighting, restaurants and cafes facing the Foss.

Use Castle Car park as a parkland to enhance this historic site and use for performances and occasional markets to take the pressure off Parliament Street.

Land on Piccadilly side should provide space for larger retail units with the backs opened up and providing a view across the river and/or the castle area. Could provide a children's play area at Tower Gardens.

Pedestrianise the area to make Coppergate development more accessible. Opportunity to improve the character of the area, to green the city, more open space around Cliffords Tower and Foss Walkway. Riverside walk would offer new dimension/vistas for visitors if it was expanded with a marina development.

Critical linkages to the city centre but need to make the river more visible.

Coach drop off should be incorporated within this new 'quarter'

Potential for 'underground' car park near Foss Basin/Skeldergate/St Georges and outdoor performance space. Coach drop off point on Piccadilly.

Boundary of opportunity area should take in both sides of Piccadilly down to the Foss/Ouse junction.

Consider a wider boundary – Reynard's Garage, open space beside the Ouse, Fossgate, East side of Piccadilly.

Need to make Castle Museum and riverside more accessible. Very important area historically. If the boundary was extended beyond the back of Castle Museum to create new route it would mean the area was not an island as it is now. Ensure the Castle and Eye of York is easily approached and linked via a bridge to Piccadilly

Needs a Foss footpath both sides. Foss walkway should be part of this. Longstanding aspiration and subject of reports

Market stalls could be relocated from Newgate here to add to vitality of the area. Hard standing for occasional performances should be considered.

Marina development. Access to footpath from Piccadilly in Foss Basin.

Landscape over the ring road – green walkway: Tower Street tunnelled.

Council Offices – go medieval with market underneath?

The height of buildings along Piccadilly should be limited – should not be seen from Tower Street above the Female Prison

3. Gateway Streets

Issues:

Economically – these will pay less than city centre in rates and rents so will not be as economic as businesses tend to gravitate towards the centre as they become more successful. Why is the council pressing ahead with Hungate when Piccadilly has been an awful eyesore for years?

Access – bus road = problems

Conflict of issues – parking/access.

Route from the Station should be included as a Gateway Street

Micklegate is a very interesting area but messy.

Empty units in some areas

There is a limit to how much can be engineered in revitalising streets – cyclic market forces, weather etc.

Ideas to address issues:

Could perhaps become specialist areas.

Dressing streets and brand the routes to give them an identity.

Planners need to be more relaxed in these areas.

Walking trail for Micklegate – highlight interesting buildings

Pedestrianising Gillygate wouldn't work but would help to improve the evening ambience on certain streets e.g. Stonegate and the Minster area and would be great to extend that feel to other areas of the city.

Separate quarter idea is very good but keep individual character of the city areas.

Main music centre (central hall) at York St John's University is not used for public events even though it used to host some big events (The Who etc.)

This would be a great public venue – why has it not been used for years?

The Fossgate/Walmsgate area would be an excellent area to extend the already established food/restaurant culture.

Stonebow to Peasholm Green could provide some housing, however the road front may also be suitable for larger retail units.

Museum Street/Lendal Bridge should be included – to enable evening economy.

Streets need to be pitched at a certain market.

P&R drop off point on Micklegate.

Odean – key player in the city centre visitor experience.

Each gateway needs to be addressed independently – not all have or can offer the same. Goodramgate/Fossgate/Micklegate lend themselves to evening footstreets. Each street will need individual planning to retain their own identity, don't want homogenous areas

Encourage and facilitate existing traders and businesses to work together.

Invest in street environment to give a sense of arrival. Nicer to live in walk through and work in. Banners important and welcome good quality signage is vital for tourism.

Each peripheral street/quarter should have its own distinctive character. First impressions count so we must make these vibrant and accessible.

Access and public realm investment vital.

A clear traffic plan for all areas within the city walls and incoming routes is necessary

4. City Spaces

Issues:

Basic infrastructure for events and activities is essential and currently lacking. There are lots of activities happening but not much overall co-ordination such as the Edinburgh Fringe does. York needs something to bring together all the events.

Bicycle parking spoils a number of spaces – need sorting

Market needs more than just re-design and enhancement. It is competing with the shops, find a site to relocate it to. Not immediately drawn to it. Element of surprise coming upon it. Needs to be more viable and more flexible to improve offer.

Lighting in some parts of the city is poor and doesn't encourage people to use certain areas e.g. Christmas lighting last year very disappointing.

Parliament Street needs enhancement and serious de-cluttering.
Abuse of blue badges a concern in footstreets.

Ideas to address issues:

Potential for more floodlighting to highlight hidden areas and key features/buildings.

Need to work closely with Merchant Adventurers.

Newgate market – needs performance space, highlight quality buildings around it

Newgate market area could be a more flexible use area and congregation point, using less but better quality stalls, eating and drinking units, perhaps some new build. Open up the back of the Shambles to draw people in.

Improve lighting and sign posting. Priority for treatment. Whatever happens to Newgate will impact upon Parliament Street so consider both together.

Exhibition Square should be expanded as an action area and include Kings Manor by removing the railings and extend it over the road so that at times the traffic can be stopped and the whole space used.

More art and pictures around the city (similar to the ones being displayed around the city at present) could be incorporated into a citywide strategy for public art.

City Spaces needs to include the routes between the spaces – the Songline concept – a series of interpreted routes to guide around the city centre
St Helen's Square is fine as is.

Need to get traffic out of Pavement, Coppergate, Stonebow, Fossgate and Piccadilly – then remove all railings and traffic signage etc to de-clutter and make the area truly pedestrianised and improve links between the core of the city centre and the Coppergate and Castle Piccadilly areas.

Flexible use and investment to meet modern demands is required

Design needs re-thinking – needs to be co-ordinated i.e. matching street furniture etc.

Reduce the number of bike racks, trees, unnecessary signage and street furniture. Remove trees on Parliament Street, they are too big.

Reduce or remove further vehicle allowances/exemptions in the footstreets

Green spaces around the city walls present opportunities but use would need to respect integrity and setting of walls.

The Minster Plaza should exclude cyclists.

Each space should be distinctive, catering for a certain type of audience.

Routes could be publicised more. Branding is important and snickleway maps with points of interest would be useful.

Include Dean Park and Museum Gardens in this opportunity area.

5. Riversides

Issues:

Shabby area along from the City Screen and outside Argos needs work on it.

Snickleways uninviting and need to have a destination i.e. to the riverside.

Rivers very important and great assets, the subject of previous reports and longstanding projects and yet they are still underused.

Get rid of Straker's Passage (Arup report for Foss Walkway).

Ideas to address Issues:

More opportunities for rowing, regattas, dragon race type events and punting like they have in Cambridge.

Compact city but moving the Wheel to the new area is not supported and not thoughtful to local residents that will be affected.

Rivers should be opened up to be accessed more easily on both riversides.

New walkways would offer more opportunities for active walks around the city.

Back of Boots needs enhancement. Coney Street gets very crowded and an alternative walkway would be welcomed.

Need a walkway on each side of the River Foss from the female prison to Piccadilly Bridge. Keep the riversides clear on this side and don't put shops right up to the river.

More seating and better lighting.

Museum Garden 2 at St George's Field.

North Street as cycle hub.

Promenade would be useful and more use of the river itself (boats, river taxis, including more/continuous riverside walkways, boat trips along Ouse from Museum Gardens to Castle Museum, river walk wide enough to accommodate stalls/small shops etc.).

Ferry across to North Street.

Punch hole in Coney Street to create riverside square.

Punctuate the frontage with small public areas/gardens with snickleways from Coney Street creating access.

Lighting of the rivers in the evening e.g. Foss and consider re Castle Piccadilly

Boundary:

Defining the boundary to include the area within the city walls and also the residential and commercial areas directly outside the city walls including the Groves, Bootham, Layerthorpe, Fishergate, Skeldergate etc. would be the most useful even though some issues are specific to the city walls only.

Should use extremities of all boundaries including the NRM.

Other:

In each opportunity area there is an opportunity to explain / interpret the historic environment which should be taken.

AAP should include reference to the Minster Quarter.