

D: Statement of Community Involvement

Key Stakeholder Workshop 1

Thirteen representatives from City of York Council, York Civic Trust, York Archaeological Forum, Conservation Areas Advisory Panel and English Heritage came together to attend a Stakeholder Workshop on 25 January 2011 facilitated by Alan Baxter & Associates. The aim of this Workshop was to share knowledge and develop initial concepts through group working. The event was an opportunity to bring the key players from the client team together with others to exchange information and allow for different opinions and priorities to be drawn out and discussed. The workshop was extremely helpful in giving the project team a clear outline of the key issues that face York. The day was split into two parts.

The morning session was used to identify the key problems facing the Central Historic Core Conservation Area, future dreams for the city and the solutions/mechanisms for achieving them. The attendees' comments are at the end of this section but the general themes were:

Problems

- the impact of traffic and movement
- poor quality of the public realm
- poor quality design of modern buildings
- the need to improve management of the Conservation Area

Dreams

- high quality modern design suitable to the scale of the city
- better public realm and open spaces

Solutions

- making conservation the basis for decision making
- clearer principles for new design
- looking to best practice in other cities
- more joined-up thinking/ communication between Council departments and other Conservation Area stakeholders.

In the afternoon, the attendees were split into two groups and each walked around a different part of the city to focus on the issues in more detail. Group 1 looked at the Micklegate and Railway and Corporate Quarter character areas. Group 2 looked at the Castle, Piccadilly and Walmgate character areas.

After their walks, the groups reconvened around a large plan of their areas to discuss the issues. Each summarised their findings in words and diagrams and presented them to the other group.

Group 1: Micklegate, Railway and Corporate Quarter

- The station forecourt should be a major public space; this could be enabled by relocating bus stops and car park to York Central
- Better permeability could be achieved between Toft Green and the station if Queen Street bridge was removed
- The route to Lendal Bridge should be freed of clutter and integrating green space should be the priority
- A footbridge from Memorial Gardens to Museum Gardens was enthusiastically supported
- The riverside should be improved through 'greening' and control of building heights
- Trees should be managed to protect views to the Minster.

Group 2: Castle, Piccadilly and Walmgate

- Residential use should be strengthened as it gives areas character and identity; it is a living city.
- Bus routes split the city in two; there should be no through routes and other streets should be utilised (e.g. Piccadilly)
- Streets are cluttered and need a more co-ordinated approach
- York has a unique offer because of its building quality which sets it apart; it is not Leeds
- Parking should be removed from the Castle and hidden underground
- Traffic lanes around Walmgate Bar should be reduced and it given more of a 'buffer' from cars
- Views from the city walls should be protected.

Before the attendees departed they were asked to come up with three words which describe why York is special.

Common themes included:

Complexity and interest - fascinating, vibrant, surprising, unique, rich, variety, complex, juxtaposition, variety

Liveable human scale: compact, low rise, comfortable human scale, liveable, inviting

Distinctive townscape character: irregular townscape, burgagge plot scale, variety of materials, variety of scale, minster, walls, a complete history

Walkable city: network, pedestrians are king, more footstreets now – not wait 40 years!

David Warburton (Head of Design, Conservation and Sustainable Development, York City Council) closed the workshop by thanking the attendees for their input.

Stakeholder Comments

What three words describe York: what makes it special?

- Fascinating, complex, liveable
- Compact, varied, surprising
- Variety, human scale
- Burgage plot scale, variety of materials, variety of scale
- Compact, low rise, townscape variety
- Surprising, inviting, vibrant
- Complex, compact, unique
- Network, rich, juxtaposition
- Minster, walls, irregular
- Pedestrians are king
- Comfortable human scale
- A complete history
- More footstreets now – not wait 40 years!

Problems – what is the worst problem in York?

- A city without pride (could be for all, young in schools integrated with community)
- Poor management of street/ highway
- Pride of place/ public realm
- For sale and to let signs all over the centre
- Shabbiness, untidiness
- Uncoordinated signage and street furniture
- Poor pavements, materials, design, non-uniformity
- Traffic

- Buses
- Public space, car parking
- Pedestrian segregation
- Too many people! Overuse of public areas
- Under use of upper floors in the city centre
- Too many poorly designed modern buildings which obscure major historical buildings or aspects
- Out of scale large developments within the walls indicating a recent lack of appreciation of fine grain and material heritage that makes central York special
- Scale of grain
- Lack of unified vision and activity
- No mechanism to realise aspirations (mismatch)
- 'Conservation' as a term being seen as of the past and not the future
- (Lack of) joined up thinking
- It needs a modern landmark?
- Educating designers on conservation
- Educating public on conservation

Dreams – what should the city be like in 20 years?

- A city without restricted public spaces – shared spaces for people
- Need a high quality masterplan, Esher ++
- Vehicle free within walls
- We have continued that character of York where great buildings each of their own time sit comfortably side by side
- Inventiveness of using sustainable materials and techniques
- Economic growth based upon an appreciation of the historic and environmental character of the city
- Having the confidence to learn from comparable European places – York to recognise and believe that it is internationally significant and can set standards
- Greatly improved design, monitored and supported by a more proactive City planning dept which has vastly increased their standards of design – leading to much better setting of buildings
- A clean tidy city of well maintained buildings
- To have a legacy of new buildings people don't want to pull down (but are of their time)
- More public open space with 2nd park around Clifford's Tower andalong approach roads. Quieter place with wildlife.
- Get rid of double yellow lines!
- Better involvement of young people in city programmes
- York has 'built on its strengths', knitting together the gaps in its historic core with correctly scaled buildings which have helped attract small-scale businesses, shops etc that are attractive to visitors and support and sustain its prosperity.

Solutions – how can we solve problems and make the dreams happen?

- More stringent design review process together with increased public awareness
- Be more prescriptive e.g. thou shalt not have any more building in the moat around the city walls
- Car free centre – prioritise environmental concerns as a key objective
- Use conservation area appraisal as basis for developing strategies and plans to bring about a stated overall vision (which might be to develop a world-class city focussing on, and using as a spring board, its heritage).
- ‘World heritage’ status might help get some of the more readily achievable dreams actually done!
- Better training/ education of designers, approvers and developers so their buildings have a York sense of place

- Better communication and education of the people who use and occupy the city centre buildings
- Provide opportunities and resources for young people
 - Talk to each other
 - Enable more people to do things for themselves – go away from the idea that it is all the fault of the council when things don’t happen
- Restriction of traffic from Leeman Road to Gillygate, allowing expanded green space at war memorial, more pedestrian space over Lendal Bridge, enhanced Exhibition Square and revitalised Gillygate
- A better educated City planning department that works closely with relevant city groups (York Civic Trust etc) and demands and maintains much higher quality design
- Be inspired by European standards of highway management; build on this to create a more beautiful city.