Drivers Jonas Deloitte.

Economic and Retail Growth Analysis and Vision Work
City Conversations Consultation Feedback
The City Conversations
Consultation Feedback

This report has been compiled to record the process and feedback from the consultation process. This report forms part of the evidence base for the development of the York Economic and Retail Vision and the Local development Framework.

Strategic Aim for the City conversations

• To engage with members, business and the residential community.
• To encourage meaningful and structured debate regarding the next 15 years of economic growth and change in York.

Members Briefing

Presentation to Members

A presentation and feedback session was held with Members on the 26th November.

The presentation included:
• Details of the scope of the Economic Analysis and Visioning exercise
• City Conversation methodology
• City conversation summary – key thoughts and themes

Members were also invited to comment on the suggested Vision, and feedback has been recorded within this report.

Business Conversations

Face to face conversations with key business representatives and stakeholder groups have been held to stimulate debate and generate feedback

Focused stakeholder meetings have been held in ‘round table’ discussion format. Including the following meetings:

• Local Plan Visioning session on the 5th November with approximately 25 guests from the business community. DJD gave a short presentation and facilitated a discussion.

• City Team session on the 23rd November which included 25 guests from the retail and commercial business community. DJD gave a short presentation and facilitated a discussion, including a presentation of the economic forecasting.

• Science meeting on the 23rd November which included 10 stakeholders from the Bioscience and health sector community; and
• 1-2-1 interviews with City Centre retailers to understand their issues and the dynamics of their trading.

Social Media Conversations

Engagement with the City’s residential community and the remaining business community through the use of social media.

The residential and remaining business community have been given the opportunity to engage with the ‘City Conversations’ through the following media:

• Facebook - a ‘City Conversations’ Facebook page, using the existing CYC Facebook page, detailed the purpose of the consultation exercise. Participants have been able to post comments on the page and DJD/CYC have monitored and fed into this. Access to this page is through a ‘google’ search, through CYC’s website or through the Facebook network.

• Twitter - A ‘City Conversations’ twitter account has posted regular ‘tweets’ to provoke conversations.
• Press - New articles in The Press issued by CYC.

• The consultation period was open between 7th November and 7th December
• The CYC hosted the Twitter live feed.
• The CYC website hosted a link to the ‘City Conversations’ Facebook page.
• The CYC to sent out a mailshot to tie in with press release on the 7th November.
Feedback Responses

The various responses from the City Conversations exercise have been recorded and are contained within the following pages. The comments have been organised according to the following themes that have emerged:

• Identified sector strengths;
• The City Centre environment;
• Infrastructure and accessibility.
• York’s business locations;
• Retailing;
• Attracting staff and growing the business;
• Planning and growth;
• Supply chain; and
• Marketing.

The following key indicates the source of each of the comments that are detailed in the following pages:
There is a growth in the number of jobs in the care sector—a symptom of the aging population. For the bio-science companies, clustering is useful but not essential. Bio-renewables has potential as a sector in York e.g. biologically based feedstocks. The bio-science sector has unrealised potential. Science Park—Have fantastic facilities and opportunities to rent out offices but not fully occupied. Why are there vacancies? 

Diagnostics has good prospects. In terms of regenerative medicine, links exist with Leeds general Infirmary but not York. Bio-renewables are a key strength. Bio-renewables has potential for growth using York College. York has an European Centre of excellence in diagnostics—this is an opportunity. Less focus on tourism. Proposed project called the Smart Space Specification—the universities and research businesses meet on a sub-regional level and decide on specialisms. 

Diagnostics is a clear strength for York. Retail will account for less than 20% of jobs growth. Focus on agri-food and tourism, then market and sell to the wider world. We need to move towards sectors with better quality jobs e.g. science and technology. York’s strength in science is its ability to help ideas grow and get to a certain size. The care sector will be enormous—reacting to the needs of a future aging population. The biggest growth sector in the job sector is the care sector.

USP is heritage. York is performing well because of heritage, not shops. For the bio-science companies, clustering is useful but not essential. Manufacturing find it hard to find suitable sites. Where we are more successful should be built upon e.g. Universities, financial services, research. In a recession manufacturing in China is becoming more expensive and as such businesses are choosing to re-locate back to York. 

Tourism is the bedrock of York’s economy. Tourism is an important sector but little opportunity of growth potential. Tourism is an important sector but little opportunity of growth potential. Smart specialisation is the key. This involves defining the sector strengths. Medical and Bio-Science. The Universities play a big role in these sectors. Bio-sciences and digital media are sectors that are most important. The digital sector is strong. 

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The City Centre Environment

- The whole city needs to be alive after 5pm, not just shops.
- York’s biggest asset is its environment. We need a city centre where culture is provided.
- Keep the city vibrant and eclectic.
- We should have five or ten big wheels.
- The cultural offer needs to be coordinated with bus, car park, hotel and train services to maximise options to attend.
- City centre can look scruffy at times.
- York’s night time feels very different in York. There is a stag/hen party feel.
- The retail is compact but it does not have a great reputation for shopping.
- The city centre need the right mix of retail, leisure, culture and business space.
- We need to unlock the city centre between 5 and 7pm.
- Museum gardens should be museum gardens, and not a forum for events.
- The car parks needs to stay open after 5pm in the city centre.
- Standards in City Centre management need to be maintained and built upon - not cut back.
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A trans-shipment site is needed

York is cycle friendly but there are more improvements that can be made.

Proposed duelling of the North ring road is unlikely. There may well be some junction improvements.

Get the public transport right and businesses will accept other restrictions as ease of travel is important for employees.

Invest in Science Infrastructure in city centre for internal growing business

The City should be a place with modern environmentally friendly transport links

The carparking signage needs to be improved

The cycle lanes cause congestion and the bike racks look a mess

York is cycle friendly but there are more improvements that can be made.

The City should be a place with modern environmentally friendly transport links

We must not forget how connected we are by rail.

The connections need improving for the pedestrians.

In terms of air travel improvements needed to the connection to Leeds Bradford and Manchester Airports.

Reducing cars into the city centre, improving coach park links and improving car park systems will add to the city

Park and rides close too early. It needs to be made easy for people to stay in the city centre.

There are different parking charges or residents and visitors. This needs to stop.

Train infrastructure – high speed 2 Leeds and improvements made on East Coast Main Line North.

Transport links prove a challenge for industry in peripheral locations

There is a perception that it is hard and expensive to park in York

The challenge is making it easier to get into the city centre

The City should be a place with modern environmentally friendly transport links

People using the train from Scarborough to York, there needs to be smaller stations, such as Haxby.

The carparking signage needs to be improved

We must not forget how connected we are by rail.

Clifton Moor is difficult to access at peak times.

Infrastructure and accessibility

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Clifton Moor is difficult to access at peak times.
Heslington East is considered to be an opportunity site for the bio-science sector.

North Minster Business Park is a suitable location for more bioscience space—it's the right side of Leeds.

York Science Park is not suitable for larger companies as they have to locate over two floors.

Incubating space in the centre generates 10-15 business start ups a year. People in this space tend to go back into their home once their space expires.

There should be more provision of live and work spaces.

The Science Park is not in an ideal location to travel to and from.

Clifton moor is approximately 30% empty. Why is this?

The ideal space for bio-science companies is a sophisticated shed with a smart front door.

A central business hub is needed.

York’s Business Locations

The digital sector has £2.5m on the table for a new location—perhaps near the train station or in the Guildhall.

Digital companies have a preference for a city centre location.

The Digital sector has £2.5m on the table for a new location—perhaps near the train station or in the Guildhall.

Creative arts/digital media don’t have standard office needs. Now the city has a scheme to provide an appropriate suite in the next 12 months.

There’s not enough decent office space within 10 mins walk of the train station.

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Clifton moor is approximately 30% empty. Why is this?
National brand shops are not big enough to carry full ranges. The city centre needs to be distinctive enough to attract – not the size of the shops.

The competition for the retail is the internet and the out of town shopping areas.

The evidence I have is that multichannel customers spend more in store, so we need to work with the opportunity rather than try to combat it.

The strength of the cultural and visitor economy in York is a key driver for retail.

It would be good to have lots of small independent retailers & businesses that aren't directly linked to the tourist industry.

Shops will soon become showrooms.

Shops shut too early and makes the environment hostile.

There is very little home ware offer in the City Centre.

How can we better use the space above the retail?

There is only 20% overlap in customers between the City Centre and Monks Cross.

Opening a small independent shop in the city is becoming cost prohibitive because of business rates.

Reinvigorating late night shopping through Christmas will drive revenue for retailers.

We need to create a sustainable environment for quality retailers.

Opening a charity shop, a coffee shop, a restaurant and a betting shop is cheap, easy and uncontrolled. These are not the kind of shops that are going to provide growth.
Attracting staff and growing the business

The problems with unaffordable housing in York make it harder to attract highly skilled staff.

Start-ups are good and strong in this city.

Digital businesses are struggling to recruit new staff due to lack of affordable housing.

There are few large bio-science companies - most are medium. Is there room to grow?

The is no suitable grow-on space. Medical companies have to occupy space with the right image.

If someone moves to York for a specialised job and the company goes under, there is no chance of re-employment.

As important as job creation to grow economies is strengthening the workforce pipeline and nurturing talent.

Jobs should fit people, but people need to fit jobs.

Need to address the skills agenda. There are 3000 people unemployed, 550 of those are looking for sales assistant type jobs. 290 for warehouse jobs.

There is a huge skills base in York that flows out to Leeds.

Medical companies have to occupy space with the right image.

It is impossible to attract senior staff therefore we have to train from within.

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Planning and growth

- Why do we need York to grow? Everything suggests that a large quantity of land is needed.
- Planning should not be too restrictive, showing a more strategic and flexible approach.
- Rather than city growth, it should be sub-regional growth- looking to our neighbours for strength.
- Making the city more beautiful will secure economic growth.
- It is ambitious to grow and be environmentally friendly.
- There should be lots of small moves, not one big one. Big moves are risky. The city should evolve through smaller moves.
- Planning is a problem

Marketing

- Marketing the retail through the press is not working.
- Marketing of the bio-sciences should be better. There are lots of positives that aren’t known.
- Alive after 5 is an interesting concept- we’ve tried similar but it keeps failing- do we need better marketing?

Supply chain

- Supply chain leakage does exist e.g. Lawyers, accountants are often from Leeds or London.
- York has a reputation as being closed for businesses
- We need to build a resilient economy, with the right type of business. History of big monopolies that then go bust.
- York is getting a reputation for not getting anything done. Terry’s site, barbican, teardrop/York central, British sugar – all not developed.
- The spatial aspect of the vision needs to consider National Planning Policy – being viable and deliverable
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Lessons Learnt

The feedback responses have provided some valuable insight into the issues and opportunities relevant to York’s economic future. The following conclusions have been drawn in relation to each of the identified themes arising from the ‘City Conversations’.

- **Identified sector strengths**: Certain sectors of the economy are reported to show potential for growth including: the bio-sciences (with diagnostics being a specific identified strength), digital and bio-renewables. There is a desire to increase the quality of the jobs created, and this can be achieved through ‘smart specialisation’ in identified high productivity employment positions.

- **The City Centre environment**: The key messages include: a desire to extend opening hours of the whole city centre past 5pm- including retail, leisure, culture, car parking and park and ride; a need to improve the quality of the streetscape around the city centre; a focus on pedestrian movement and improving the experience of walking, including to and from key carparking sites; and maintaining the quality of the retailers, including encouraging independent retailers.

- **Infrastructure and accessibility**: Congestion is clearly an issue for the city and new development need to carefully consider the capacity of the existing network. Further investment in public transport into and out of the city will encourage less vehicle use - a key method for coping with capacity constraints. Restricting vehicle movement within the city centre in favour of the pedestrian is considered to be preferable, if partnered with appropriate improvements elsewhere e.g. parking and public transport.

- **York’s business locations**: Sites in close proximity to the train station are necessary (possibly for digital?) and a new site for the bio-science sector is required as the existing science park is in an ideal location.

- **Retailing**: The strength of the York City Centre retail offer is in the quality it provides. The street environment needs to be maintained to reflect this and efforts need to be made to ensure quality independents are encouraged over non-A1 uses.

- **Attracting staff and growing the business**: Some highly specialised companies find it hard to recruit, and housing could be part of the problem. Training staff from within is one way to mitigate against this issue.

- **Skills**: York’s residents are highly skilled and there is a good match between jobs and the skills set of its residents. This needs to be maintained as the population grows.

- **Planning and growth**: Planning is often considered to be a restriction on growth but this could be appropriate given York’s economic strengths in its physical environment.

- **Supply chain**: Some supply chain leakage is reported to exist.

- **Marketing**: There is opportunity to advertise York’s achievements to enhance the investment potential e.g. strengths in bio-sciences.
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