

York Walls

Summary of their conservation in practice



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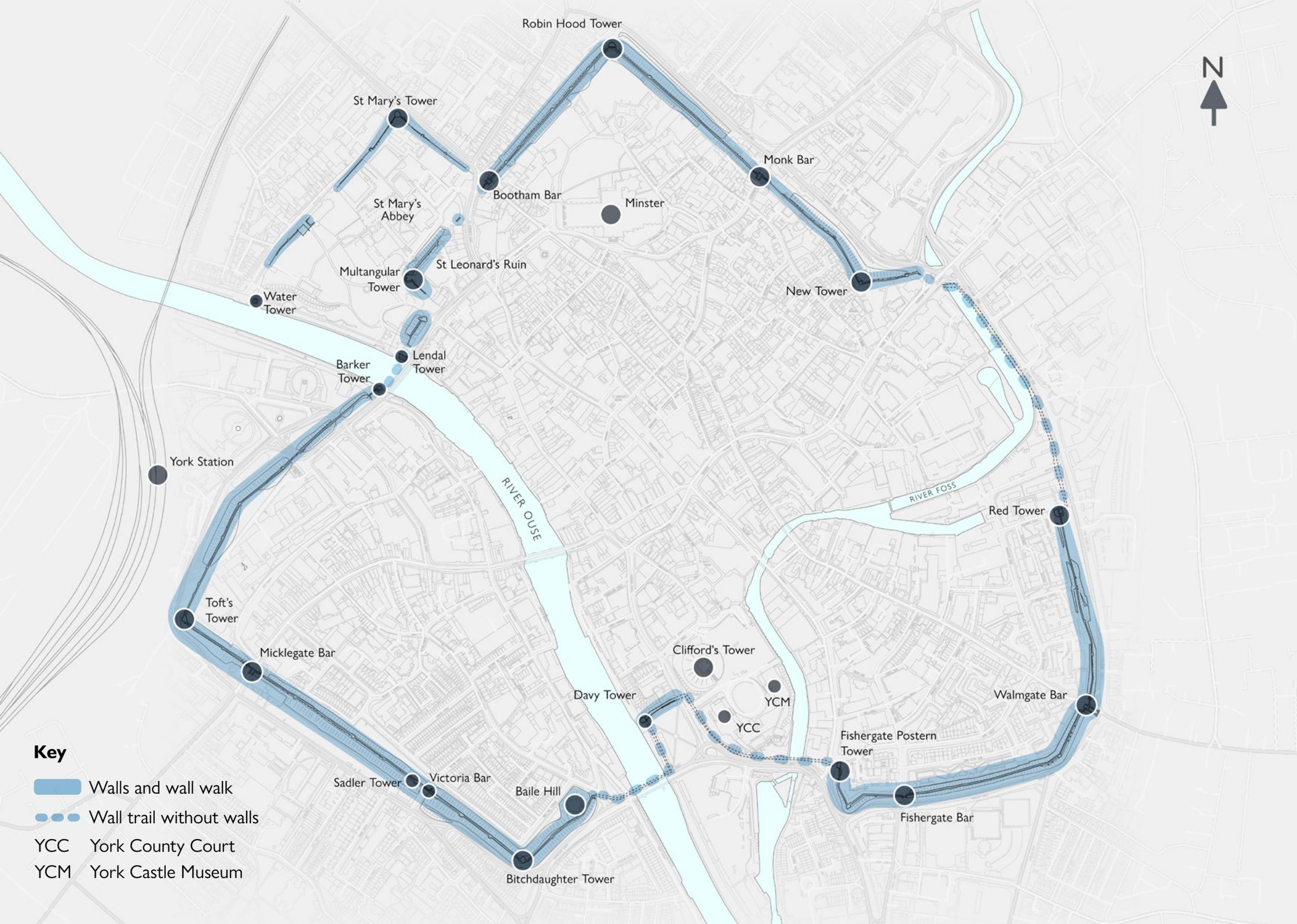
1. Introduction

The walls are one of the defining features of York's historic townscape and are at once an essential piece of civic infrastructure and a major tourist attraction. They are of outstanding importance as one of the most complex and best-preserved examples of city walls and associated structures. Their overall significance is wide-ranging and formed of multiple, overlapping and evolving heritage values, but in essence:

The York City Walls are of exceptional significance on account of their long and unique history and their historic and continuing relevance to, and impact on, the culture, society, economy and environment of the City of York and its wider, universal context.

The walls, bars and towers are the responsibility of the City of York Council (CYC). This document sets out in brief the special interest of the walls, the challenges and opportunities they present and how CYC look after them.





Key

-  Walls and wall walk
-  Wall trail without walls
- YCC York County Court
- YCM York Castle Museum

Robin Hood Tower

St Mary's Tower

Monk Bar

St Mary's Abbey

Bootham Bar

Minster

Multangular Tower

St Leonard's Ruin

New Tower

Water Tower

Barker Tower

Lendal Tower

York Station

RIVER OUSE

RIVER FOSS

Red Tower

Toft's Tower

Micklegate Bar

Clifford's Tower

Davy Tower

YCM

YCC

Walmgate Bar

Fishergate Postern Tower

Sadler Tower

Victoria Bar

Baile Hill

Fishergate Bar

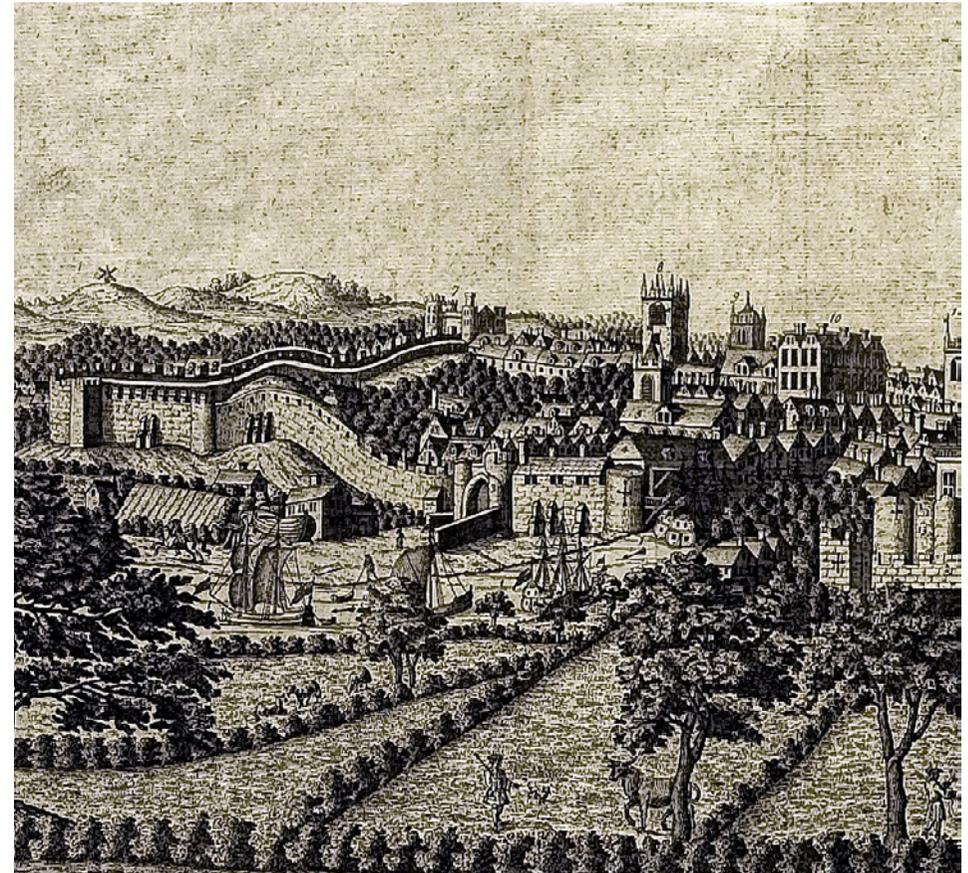
Bitchdaughter Tower

2. Summary of significance

Introduction to Values and Assessing Significance

At the heart of conservation is the creative process of caring for a building or place. Conservation begins by understanding a building or place thoroughly; this means researching and analysing its history, purpose, materials, construction, aesthetic qualities, setting, use, and condition. The first step in the process of conservation is to establish the 'significance' or 'special interest' of a building or place. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines significance as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological (potential to yield evidence about the past), architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.



Detail from Edmond Barker's South-East Prospect of York, 1718, showing Skeldergate Tower and postern (YMT)

Historic England's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008) sets out current best practice for assessing significance and advises that the following **core values** are considered in order to fully understand the significance of a place:

Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.

Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Summary of significance

The City Walls are of exceptional significance on account of their long and unique history and their historic and continuing relevance to, and impact on, the culture, society, economy and environment of the City of York and its wider, universal context.

*The walls of York are the longest in England – 2¾ m. long – and the best maintained. Moreover, there is nothing in the country to emulate its gates or bars.*¹

The **Precinct Walls of St Mary's Abbey** are also of national aesthetic, archaeological and historic value and are considered to be: 'the finest to have survived from any English medieval monastery'.²

1 Pevsner, N and Neave, D., 2002, p192

2 Wilson and Burton, 1988, p13



Moses Griffiths' 1777 view of Micklegate Bar, including its barbican (YMT).

Aesthetic value: Highest

The walls essentially define and form a fundamental part of York's 'sense of place'. Their iconic status is demonstrated by the numerous historical representations of them, many of which form parts of universally valued collections. This is reinforced by the volume of international visitors who come to York to experience and photograph them. It is also recognised that there are instances where features or developments detract from this outstanding aesthetic value and there is potential for the setting of the walls to be improved.



Part of the north-east wall of the Roman fortress

Historical and evidential value: Highest

The City Walls and their associated structures are one of the most complex and best-preserved examples of their type. The number of periods and features, both upstanding and buried, and the variety of built heritage represented reflects the long and unique history of the walls. The series of alterations and additions made over the centuries tell their own story and demonstrate the prevailing values of each era and their association with numerous historical figures and events, civilisations and groups is of considerable value.³ This is restricted to some extent by the limitations of onsite interpretation, the lack of intellectual access and selectivity of the histories told.

³ Earl. J. 2003.



A 19th-century view of the restored walls looking towards Layerthorpe, with Harlot Hill Tower on the left (CYC).

Communal or cultural value: High

The walls as they are presented to us today are a result of the shifting cultural values attributed to them – and our historic environment as a whole – from fulfilling their defensive and defining role to a widely recognised amenity for residents, tourist attraction and valued heritage asset. They have continuing relevance and value for local people and play a considerable social and cultural role – being used as a shortcut and a meeting place, for exercise and physically defining communities. This value is constantly evolving and differs between various groups and individuals. There is potential for this value to be expanded through engagement and research.



View of Multangular Tower from the ruins of St Leonard's Hospital

In the context of York's walls, the **four core values** have further subcategories:

Education/research potential: Highest

The education opportunities afforded by the walls are considerable given their exceptional heritage value and their status as an incomparable global resource. The walls still have the power to relate dramatically the events and achievements of 2000 years of history and past civilisations and they have the potential to inform people in new ways as our understanding evolves. This is limited to some extent by the lack of a formal research agenda and therefore opportunities for cooperative research and study should be exploited.



Horsley's map of York, 1694 (YMT)

Group value: Highest

First and foremost, this value is demonstrated through its state as an almost complete circuit of defensive elements – walls, towers, bars and rivers. Furthermore, to have four surviving medieval gates as part of an almost complete circuit is extremely unique. There are also a variety of other significant sites that characterise York and contribute to their setting, such as the Minster, the Museum Gardens, Merchant Taylor's Hall and St Mary's Abbey. However, the true value of these other elements in relation to the walls deserves further study (currently being undertaken in part) to establish their individual and combined level of significance holistically.⁴ The removal of

⁴ As part of the forthcoming submission of a UNESCO WHS bid.



Monk Bar

any of the Bars (currently an issue due to traffic impacts and fire risk), major features or sections of Wall would have an extremely negative impact on this value.

Engineering value: Highest (potential)

The walls are of considerable engineering value in what they can tell us about prevailing historic construction techniques – given their size, their age and variety of structures along the circuit. Further research should be undertaken on, for example: the foundations, which are likely to reveal medieval construction techniques relating to defensive structures and the larger Bars, which are likely to offer insights into the history of the structural use of timber and of defensive technology as a whole.



View of the Minster from the walls

Economic value: High

All sections of the walls represent the past prosperity of the city and its expansion (and decline) in various periods as well as the regulation and collection of taxes on goods. Today, whilst the walls are one of the key defining features of York, they mostly provide indirect economic benefits alongside minor revenue from rent and the sale of souvenirs. There is potential for enhancement of their economic value through enhanced access, interpretation, engagement and publicity or sensitive development - whilst retaining their significance.



The walls and ramparts

Environmental value: High

The natural environment associated with the walls includes nationally scarce trees, protected bats and regionally scarce botanical species in addition to providing a locally important green corridor for wildlife and as a fundamental element of the urban environment. Further assessment on the ecological contribution of the walls is required to fully appreciate their environmental value.

3. How the City of York Council cares for the walls

During the late-medieval and post-medieval periods mure-masters were elected to look after the walls and they were supported by a number of masons and 'Common Husbands'. From the 18th century, City Stewards were elected and from the 19th century, Corporation Surveyors. For a full list of known city officials responsible for the walls from c.1448 to 1971 see the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/york/vol2/pp174-175>.

The walls are now the responsibility of City of York Council, and are cared for by the members of the Directorate of Economy, Place and Transport, including the City Archaeologist, City Walls Manager and the City Walls Stonemasons.

CYC allocate revenue and capital funding annually to support the needs of the City Walls', including the allocation of £1.6m capital investment in 2016/17.

In addition, the walls and bars and surrounding land are operated by a variety of groups including:

The Yorkshire Museum Trust (YMT) – Museum Gardens, including St Mary's Gatehouse and Tower and York Art Gallery

York City Sightseeing – Postern Tower

Explore York Library and Archive – lease the lawn and one room within St Leonard's

YORVIK/YAT – Museums at Monk Bar and Micklegate Bar

Friends of York Walls – Fishergate Postern Tower

The Red Tower (Red Tower Community Interest Company) – Red Tower (community asset transfer)

The sheer number and combination of bodies involved with the management, protection and development of the walls has in the past, led to the development of a number of different visions for the future of the walls. In order to create a collaborative approach to their future management, the York Walls Liaison Group was formed in January 2016 and an update of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was commissioned in 2020.

The York Walls Conservation Management Plan

Firstly, what is a Conservation Management Plan (CMP)?

It is a document which sets out:

Why a place is special and to whom

The risks that jeopardise that special interest

Guidelines to sustain and enhance that special interest

Its purpose is to:

provide an understanding of the significance of the City Walls and St Mary's Abbey Precinct Walls, and also their setting



unlock and guide a series of future economic, sustainability and access opportunities



ensure the continued use of the walls in a manner consistent with their conservation, sustaining and enhancing their significance.

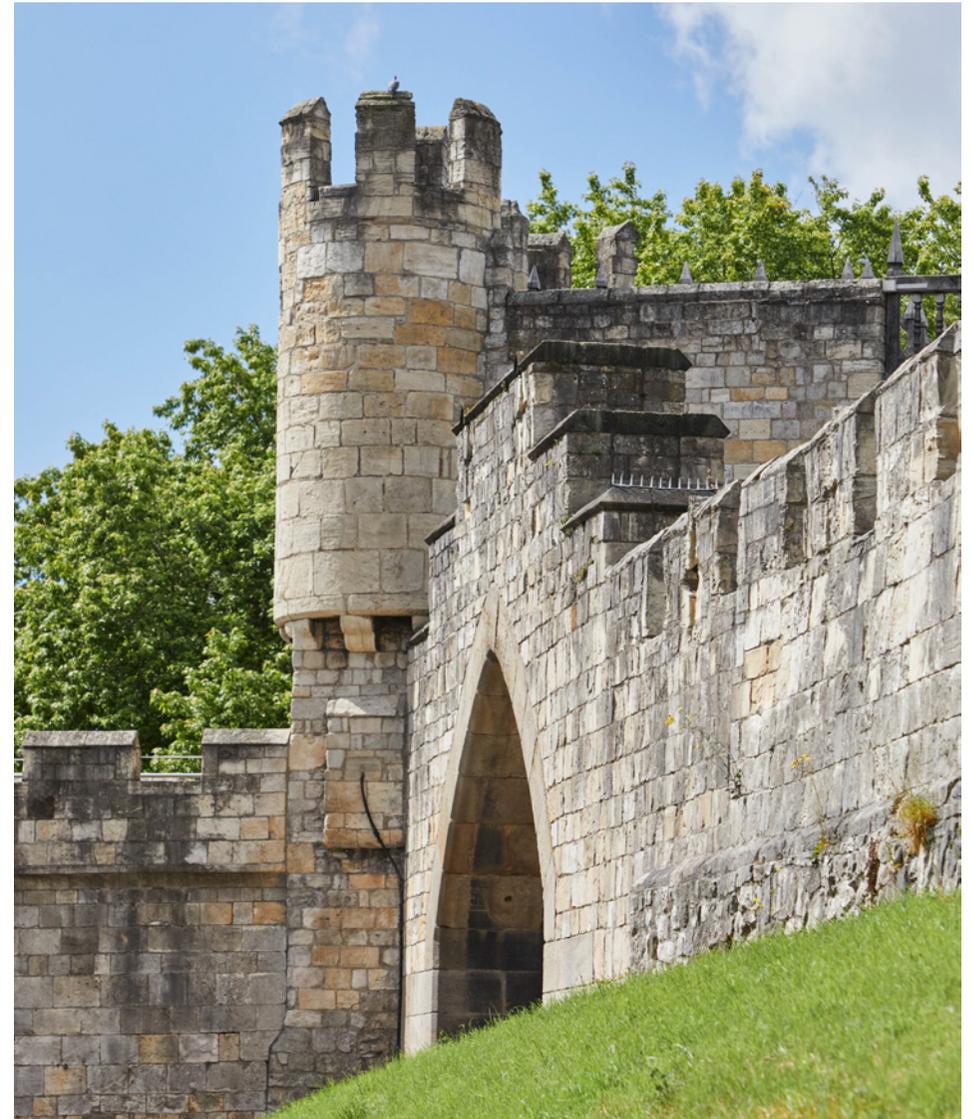
Consultation formed a vital part of the production of the CMP, taking place virtually through a series of workshops and in-depth reviews.

The CMP is divided into two key sections: 'appraisal' and 'management'.

The appraisal of the walls provides an assessment of their significance based upon an analysis of its development, the people responsible for their creation and their social, political, economic, and architectural context. It concludes with a summary of issues that affect or may affect the significance of the walls and also of the opportunities which they present. Its production required historic research, site visits and workshops with stakeholders.

The management plan provides conservation guidance on the future management and opportunities for enhancement of the walls based upon the findings of the appraisal, with resultant principles and recommendations to ensure their significance is protected. This element of the plan was also developed in workshops with the stakeholders.

The next page presents a selection of challenges and opportunities identified in the 2021 CMP.



Challenges and Opportunities

Conservation of the fabric, maintenance, repair and enhancement

Challenge: Variances in conservation philosophy/approaches to repair

Opportunity: Establish an overarching conservation philosophy/approaches to repairs and new work

Development and setting

Challenge: Inappropriate development within the setting of the walls

Opportunities: The sensitive redevelopment of buildings or sites which currently detract and/or planting to soften existing development

Ensure that future development avoids competing with the Walls and interrupting key views from and of them

Landscape and environment

Challenge: Lack of awareness of ecological importance

Opportunity: Enhancement of understanding through research and studies

Archaeology

Challenge: Limited archaeological research programme

Opportunity: Development of a full research agenda

Identification of areas of potential archaeological research/investigation

Opportunities for community archaeology and collaborative education projects.

and

Publication of archaeological reports – ‘Grey Literature’.

Access and interpretation

Challenge: Physical and intellectual access

Opportunities: Improvements to physical access through developing an accessible wall walk and/or selective ramps

Fostering community involvement and ‘sense of place’ through engagement on projects involving interpretation and development

Management

Challenge: Multiple stakeholders

Opportunities: Continuation of a holistic management structure, with regular Liaison Group meetings

Creation of a rolling list of opportunities for the stakeholders to use

Understanding and research

Challenge: Lack of understanding and resources

Opportunity: Develop an easy to use and maintain record – accessible to all those involved in the upkeep of the walls

Management Plan recommendations in summary

A deep understanding of the site was developed as part of the appraisal and enabled the creation of a conservation philosophy for the future management of the walls. As it is difficult to propose a single philosophy which encompasses the walls in their entirety, the management plan sets out a number of key themes upon which decisions of how and when to adapt and alter or conserve the historic fabric should be based; these are as follows:

Continued use of the monuments in a manner sympathetic to their many and evolving historic uses whilst allowing sensitive adaption to accommodate modern requirements based on a full understanding of the impact of proposals on the significance of the monuments

Retention of the monuments as a piece of civic infrastructure and key attraction within the City of York, meeting 21st century visitor expectations and enhancing the economy whilst increasing engagement with the local community and improving social well-being

Repair and conservation of the built fabric to maintain and enhance the heritage significance (including the evidential, historical, aesthetic and community values) of the monuments

Sustainable use and **improved physical access** and interpretation to ensure the site is truly accessible to all as far as its constraints will allow

These themes underpin the more detailed set of objectives and principles of the management plan. To find a full version of the CMP, see the link at the end of this document.

The objectives, principles and recommendations include opportunities for both long-term and short-term change, organised under the seven key headings shown on the previous page.

The CMP will be used by CYC and key stakeholders and it is a living document, which will be updated every three years in line with CYC's funding cycles.

4. The walls in focus

This section highlights select areas of the wall circuit as an introduction, summarising their development, the challenges and opportunities they present today and how CYC deal with each particular area. It also explores the walls' continuous role as a piece of civic infrastructure and its shift from a defensive structure to a recreational asset and tourist attraction and the challenges and opportunities presented by this function.

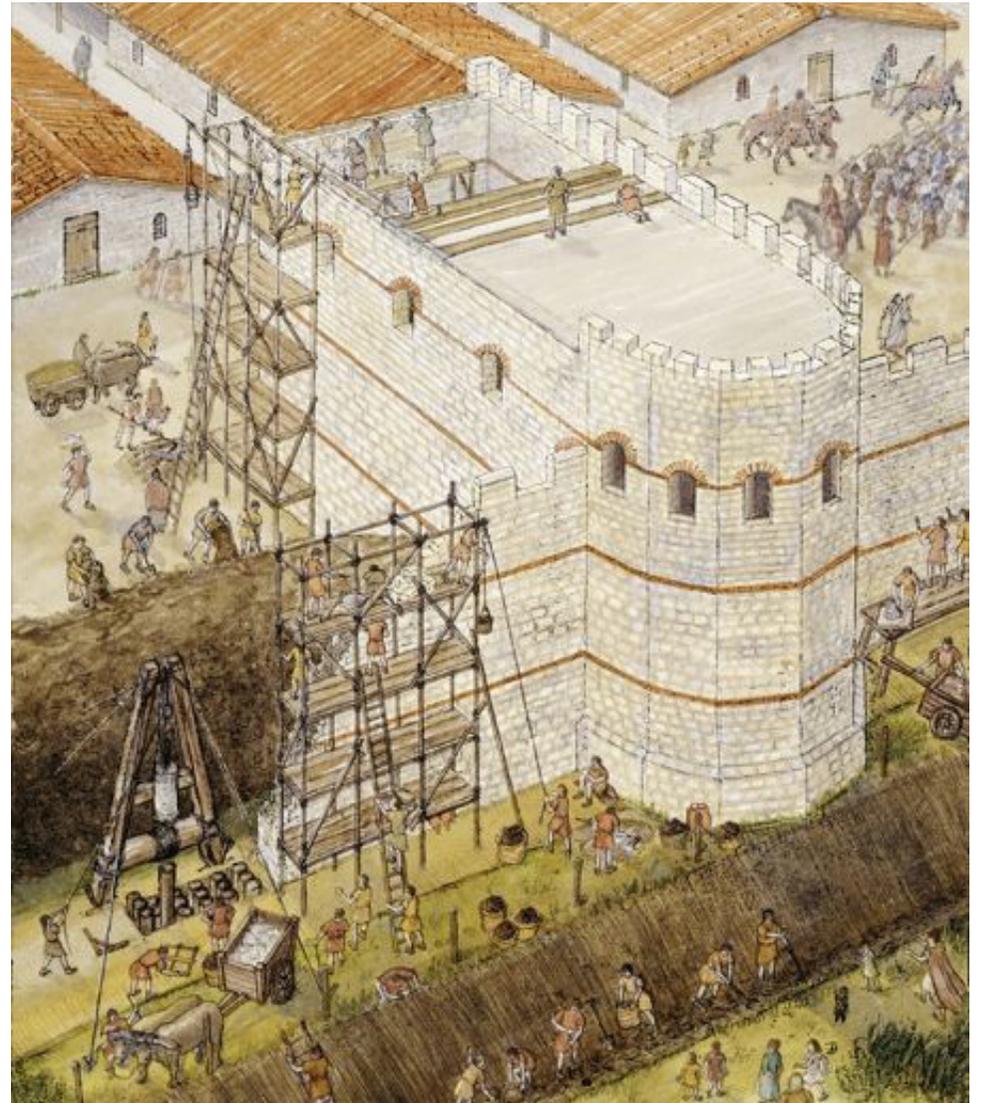


Lendal Tower to Bootham Bar

This section of the walls is one of the few without a 'wall walk', though it is visible within the Museum Gardens and the grounds of the library. It is also, arguably, the most interesting section – containing evidence of every phase of the life of York's defences – including their partial demolition.

Thanks to a series of archaeological investigations, we now understand much about the complicated development of the walls in this area; behind Explore York the city's defences can be seen to comprise no fewer than three walls, constructed at different times and for different purposes. There is nowhere better to understand the development of York's defences.

Beginning with the Multangular Tower, so-called due to its numerous facets, this structure was rebuilt in stone in the early 2nd century AD, the lower part of the tower and the wall running south east from it are formed of shallow limestone blocks and a decorative course of bricks. It is the largest and most complete element of York's Roman legionary fortress, one of the finest surviving Roman structures not just in York, but in the whole of Britain.



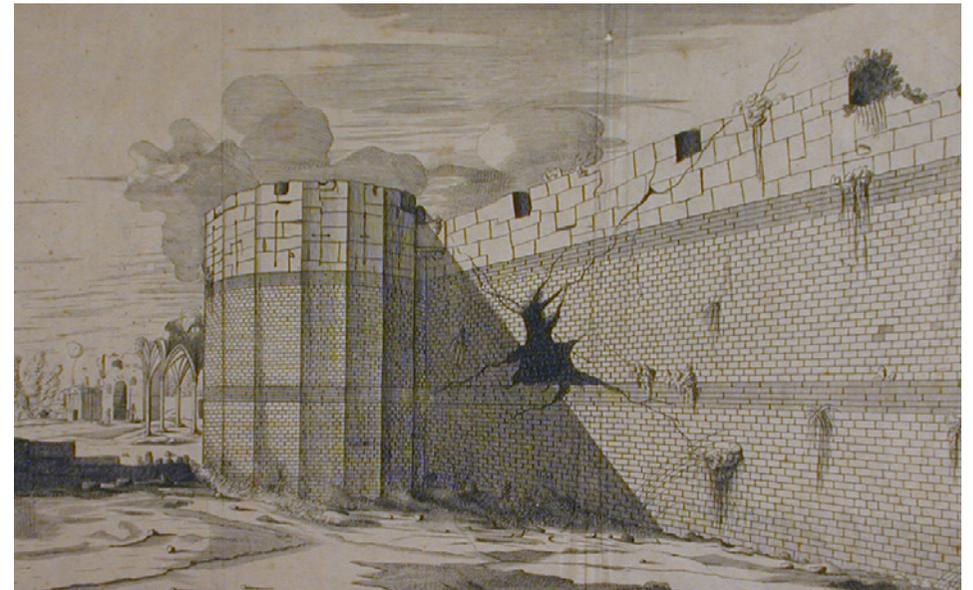
Reconstruction artwork showing the building of interval tower south west of the Roman Legionary Fortress (Historic England)

The nearby 'Anglian Tower' was so named after its discovery in the 19th century from a belief that it was built during York's re-establishment as an Anglo-Saxon royal centre during the 7th century. Some scholars now believe, however, that it could be a later Roman modification of the fortress walls.

During the Viking period, after 866, the line of the walls to the north and east of the Roman fortress were used to defend the city, which expanded to the south and east beyond the original fortress boundary. Generally the Roman walls were buried beneath earth banks, but in the SW corner they remained exposed.

This area occupied the south-western third of the precinct of the Hospital of St Peter which, from the reign of King Stephen, became known as St Leonard's Hospital. It was one of the largest establishments of its kind in mediaeval England and the remains of its chapel, infirmary and entrance passage are visible today. After the Dissolution (1541), the area was used by the Crown as the royal mint from 1546 intermittently until 1642. During the Siege of York (1643-4) the SW and NW City Walls formed part of the Royalist's defences and damage was recorded to the Roman section of wall leading SE of Multangular Tower.

The stretch of wall running NE of Multangular Tower to Bootham Bar is similar in character to the rest of the medieval walls, however this section survives only in part, as much of it was demolished in 1831 to build St Leonard's Place – the last and largest loss to the circuit of the walls. A series of archaeological investigations have been carried out in this area since the 19th century, and the walls were heavily restored in the late-1960s and early-1970s.



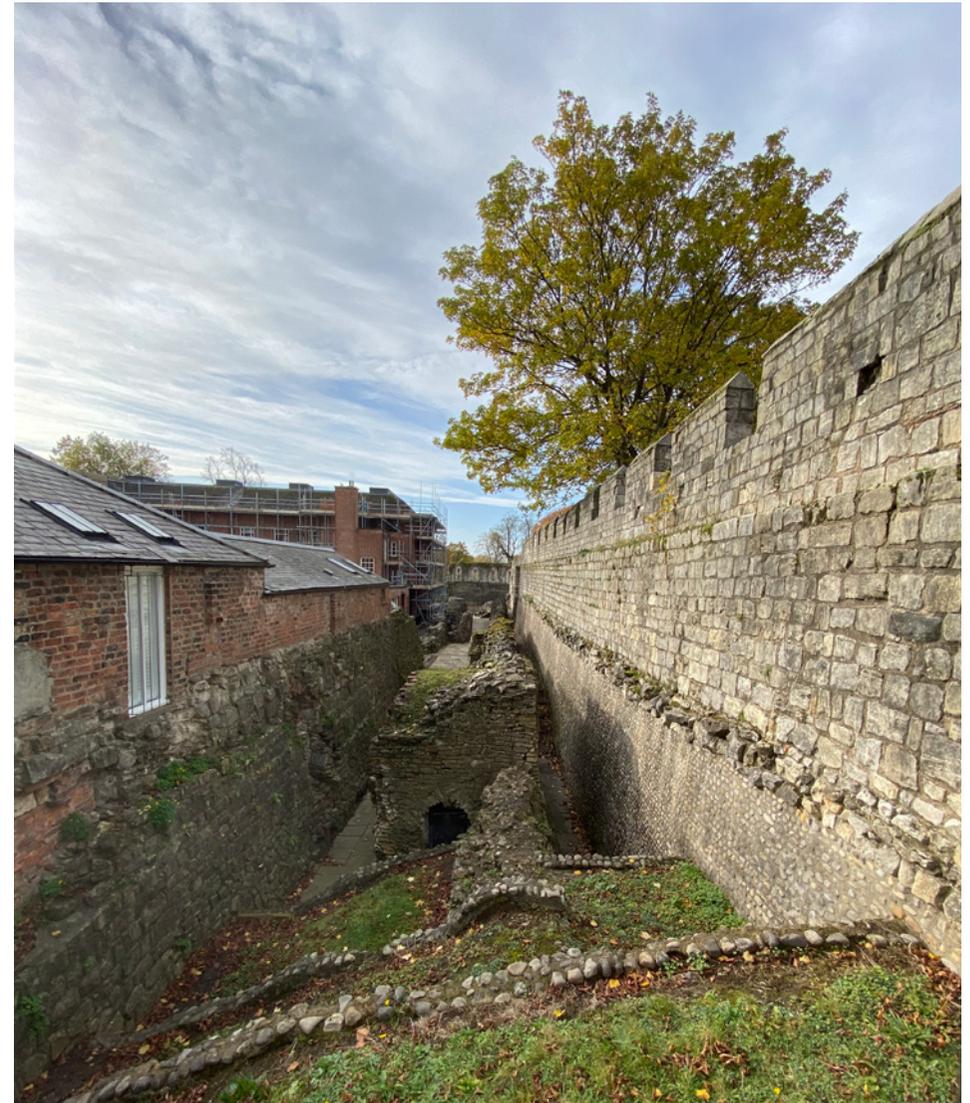
Late 17th-century engraving showing damage done to the wall south east of the Multangular Tower (YMT)

Challenges

Despite being on a main tourist route, this section of the walls is a quiet place – often missed unless on a guided tour – and whilst its character is mostly of a pleasant contemplative space, it suffers intermittently from antisocial behaviour. The Explore York garden area comprises gravel and grassed surfaces and the paths close to the walls are narrow, stepped and uneven – which limits its physical accessibility. Given the complex nature of the structures here, the interpretation could be improved and updated. The condition of the structures here is mixed and relatively good despite their age, but some of the late-20th century repairs are accelerating their decay.

Opportunities

There are a variety of opportunities to improve physical and intellectual access to this area, for example by enabling access to the rampart near the King's Manor, to enable the walls to be viewed in cross-section and the sequential series of structures in this area to be viewed from above. Encouragement of the subtle repopulation of the area would discourage antisocial behaviour through natural surveillance, subtle security measures and management processes. Undoing some of the harmful late-20th century repairs and surfaces would improve the condition of the structures and their appearance.



View of the walls from the rampart (Insall)

Section 13: River Foss

The River Foss is York's second river, quite different in character from the Ouse. It rises in the Howardian Hills, north of York, and flows for just over 19 miles to the city, on a slow and winding course.

When the Normans reconstructed the castle after the Anglo-Danish rebellion of 1069, the river Foss was dammed where it entered the Ouse, to provide a reservoir of water to maintain the level of the castle's moat. This damming of the river flooded a considerable area of land, creating what was known as 'The King's Fishpond'. The Domesday Book, compiled in 1086, recorded that two new mills, 120 acres of arable land, meadows and gardens were inundated, and this area became a key part of the medieval defences of the city, comprising a defensible obstacle between Layerthorpe Postern and the (later) Red Tower that required no further fortification. The pool was crossed in the north by Layerthorpe Bridge, and in the south by Foss Bridge. It was supervised by well-paid keepers, appointed by the king, and fish from the pond were gifted by the king to courtiers, abbots, bishops and religious houses.



Jacob Richards Plan of York, 1685 (CYC)

By the 18th century the pond had become significantly decayed, owing to the accumulation of silt, sewage and rubbish, and the area became known as Foss Islands: narrow channels of the river running to either side of a central, marshy island. In 1792, the Foss Navigation Company was formed and Acts of Parliament in 1793 and 1801 led to the river being canalised. Receipts from the new commercial waterway reached their peak in 1809, and thereafter declined. In 1853, mismanagement and competition from the railways had ruined the venture and by an 1853 Act, York Corporation took over the company and the river, which was then abandoned north of the city boundary. The marshland at Foss Islands was drained and Foss Islands Road was laid out between Layerthorpe Bridge and Walmgate Bar by the Corporation.

On the other side of the river a small power station and refuse incinerator was opened in 1900, and remained in use until 1976. The buildings – except the Grade II listed chimney – were demolished in around 1980, and replaced by large retail outlets, which now line the road. A large site on the west bank of the Foss, next to Layerthorpe Bridge, was occupied from the early 20th century by engineering company, Adams Hydraulics, which remained a significant local employer at the site until the 1990s. The former Adams site now contains apartments.



Layerthorpe Bridge and Postern George Nicholson (YMT)



Early 1920s view of Foss Islands Road, looking towards the power station and destructor chimney (CYC/Explore York)

Challenges

This is the least physically attractive part of the wall circuit in terms of setting and it is an area which visitors typically lose interest in – as there are no walls. The area is largely accessible, but is limited by multiple crossings. There is limited interpretation and signage to encourage exploration of the area and to develop understanding. Despite the historic character of the area largely being commercial, the quality of the development lining Foss Island Road detracts from the setting of the Foss and later in the circuit – the walls.

Opportunities

There are opportunities for creative interpretation, be it virtual or physical, and for this to be developed with community input. Signage is currently being updated by CYC, which will enable people to navigate and better-understand this area. Revisions to traffic management systems, improved street surfaces and planting could improve the access and the physical setting of the area considerably.

Through a series of public realm improvements, it would form part of the forthcoming accessible route.



View of the Destructor Tower and late-20th century development by the Foss (Insall)

Section 20: St Mary's Abbey Precinct Walls

In about 1085, monks from Lastingham selected a site outside the City Walls to establish what would become one of the most important Benedictine monasteries in the north. It was initially undefended, but as the City Walls were being rebuilt in stone, a wall was also built around the north-eastern part of the Abbey Precinct. This wall ran from the Abbey gatehouse on Marygate, NE to Bootham, where it turned 90 degrees towards the City Wall near Bootham Bar. Built of stone in 1266, the wall was roughly three metres high, and initially had no defensive function.

In 1318 Edward II granted licence to convert the wall into a defensible structure - it was raised and a timber wall walk added on its inner side, and new sections of wall were also added. In the 1350s the circuit was completed by a wall along the southern side, running close to the Hospitium (Abbey guest house).

Much of the wall remained after the dissolution of St Mary's Abbey in 1539, but it became increasingly concealed by houses built along Marygate and Bootham during the 17th and 18th centuries. The river wall was demolished early in the 18th century, whilst the removal of the section parallel with the City Walls on the east was probably a more gradual process.



St Mary's Abbey ruins and the Multangular Tower, in a 1778 painting by Michael Angelo Rooker (Yale Center for British Art)

St Mary's Tower and the adjoining wall at the NE corner of the precinct were badly damaged by a mine placed beneath them during the siege of York. The Tower was heavily rebuilt, with a new section of thinner wall that conspicuously fails to line up externally with the surviving medieval wall (which protrudes through the eaves of the 17th century conical roof).

At the end of the 19th century, work began to clear the houses built up against the wall in Marygate and work continued to remove buildings on Bootham into the 20th century. The wall was restored in the mid/late-20th century and two replica wooden shutters were fitted to original grooves between the merlons, to demonstrate the original function and appearance of this feature.

Challenges

The Museum Gardens are a valuable public green space, with a dramatic backdrop which includes the Abbey ruins and the walls. Challenges facing this area relate to the condition of the walls – mainly due to vegetative growth and drainage to properties lining Bootham; lack of interpretation relating to the role of St Mary's Abbey Walls in defending the city and Abbey



View of Multangular Tower from within Museum Gardens

precinct; issues of setting and access such as the placement of 'back of house' functions against the walls; street clutter and poor pedestrian access adjacent to the Postern Tower, near Bootham Bar and the City Art Gallery.

Opportunities

CYC and YMT have dual responsibility for this area of the walls and manage their maintenance and change via the Liaison Group. The YMT has a CMP for the Museum Gardens with a series of policies which align with the recommendations in the York City Walls CMP. Through an improved maintenance regime, improved access and discreet interpretation suited to the significance of the gardens and walls, the character of the gardens and their structures would be enhanced and better understood, whilst being made more accessible. Access to and appreciation of the Postern Tower could be improved through better traffic management and rationalised street furniture in this area. Within the gardens, a review of the back-of-house areas could enable some of the more interesting sections of wall to be revealed and better understood.



The Water Tower



Precinct Walls and St Mary's Tower

The walls: *From defence to amenity*

The walls had been built to defend the city from attack, but they were abandoned as defences in the mid-18th century, and transitioned into a recreational attraction. This gradual change was recorded as early as 1722, when sections of the wall walk were re-laid to provide a footpath to the south of the city and in the 1730s when new leases of properties adjoining the walls began to contain a condition allowing walking on the walls for pleasure.

The Abbey Precinct was also established as a tourist attraction in the 18th century, with visitors enjoying the commercial nursery run there by Telford, set within the ruins of the Abbey, which were seen as a 'picturesque' backdrop.

At the end of the 18th century, the City Corporation set up a committee to investigate the demolition of the walls, on the basis that the old defences were useless, expensive and a hindrance to traffic. The proposals, however, encountered strong opposition from antiquarians and in the early-19th century – spurred, perhaps by fears of the walls' imminent demise – numerous images were made of the walls and its bars. These images – born of the 18th century preoccupation with romance



The Gardens of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, York by J Storey, c.1860 (YMT)

of ruins – fostered a wider interest and greater appreciation of the walls and undoubtedly attracted visitors.

In 1824, The Association for the Protection of Ancient Footpaths in the Vicinity of York, or the York Footpath Association,⁵ was established with the aim of preserving the walls for leisure use and in 1829, their wall restoration committee drew up the first comprehensive plan for their restoration.

⁵ The first ever local conservation society.

In 1831, the building of St Leonard's Place required the removal of a section of wall, and the barbican of Bootham Bar, but the Bar itself was saved and renovated – representing the shifting values associated with the walls.

When in the 1850s Joseph Rowntree lobbied for the demolition of the walls between Monk Bar and Walmgate Bar, on the grounds of public health, opposing councillors instead suggested taking advantage of the new tourist trade. Thankfully, Rowntree's scheme was defeated and over the next decade the walls and ramparts were restored as an attraction – new hotels were built to accommodate tourists and also provided employment. Tourism also became an increasing focus in the former St Mary's Abbey Precinct, which had been developed as a garden by the Yorkshire Philosophical Society from 1827. The site was also used for horticultural exhibitions, and – in 1909 – for the lavish York Historic Pageant.

Today, the City Walls have continuing relevance and value for local people and play a considerable social and cultural role – being used as a shortcut and a meeting place, for exercise, viewed in transit through the city and physically defining communities. The walls are also the focus of rambler's associations



Women walking for pleasure on the walls south west of Lendal Bridge in around 1880 (CYC/Explore York)

and running clubs, almost half of York residents say that using the walls is their favoured leisure activity and it is thought that around 1 million people visit the walls every year.⁶

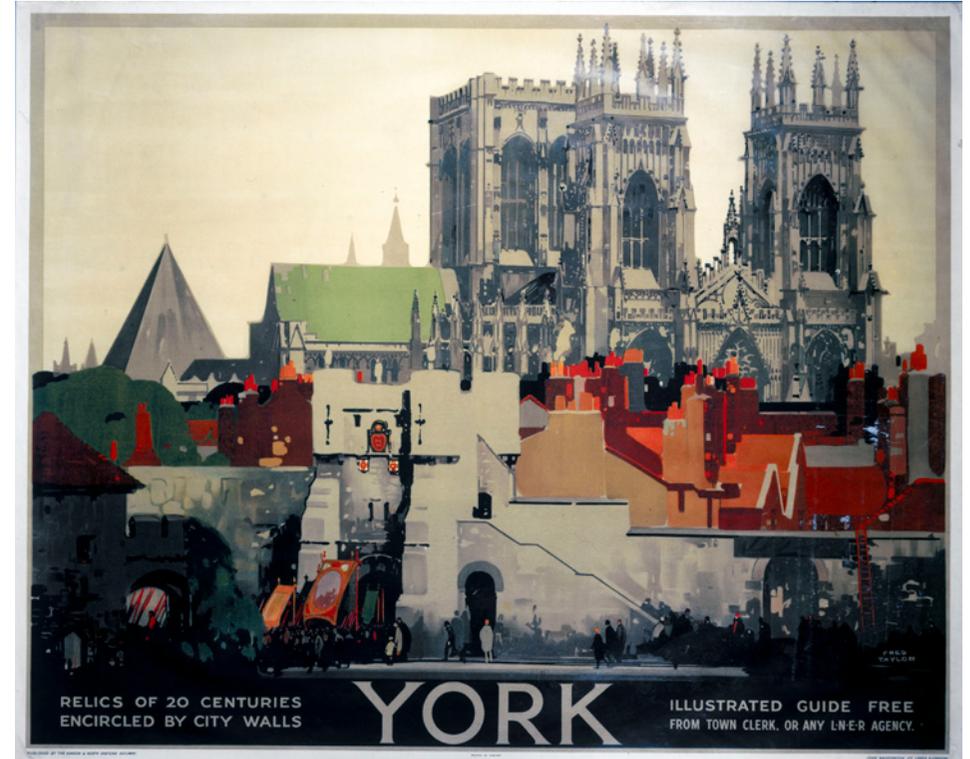
⁶ Exact figures are unknown.



View of the wall walk, looking towards the Minster (Shutterstock)

Challenges

The role of the walls as a recreational asset – an evolved rather than intended function – means that it is often under pressure from a variety of factors. These include maintenance, public safety, condition due to wear and tear, inadvertent damage, fulfilling a quality visitor experience, equal intellectual access and given its structure – physical access.



1935 poster advertising York and its walls, for the London North Eastern Railway Company (National Railway Museum Science and Society Picture Library)

Opportunities

There are countless opportunities which CYC employ to address these challenges, such as – regular maintenance and repair, regular health and safety surveys, access and facility surveys to inform improvements, and the promotion of health and wellbeing activities and cultural events to the ensure the long-term future of the walls.

5. Brief overview of policy & statutory requirements

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 was passed by the UK government, the latest in a series of Ancient Monument Acts legislating to protect the archaeological heritage of England & Wales and Scotland. In 2004, York became one of only five English cities designated as an 'area of archaeological importance' (AAI).

The map on the following page shows that the 'City Walls' are covered by two scheduled monument designations – marked in red and green and 'St Mary's Abbey Precinct Walls' is separately designated and is marked in yellow.

Listed Buildings

Listing status is designed to recognise the importance and significance of buildings and to offer statutory protection against alteration or demolition which would cause harm to their special architectural or historic interest. The City Walls (including Bars and other structures) are currently listed as ten separate entries, all at Grade I, except Davy Tower, which is Grade II*. All have Group Value and are identified on the adjacent map, along with the numerous listed buildings and structures

associated with or in close proximity to the walls (although this is not exhaustive).

Registered Parks and Gardens

The Historic England 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England' was established in 1983 and currently identifies over 1,600 sites assessed to be of particular significance. Museum Gardens, which are enclosed by the walls, are registered at Grade II and are shown in green on the adjacent map. Registration is a 'material consideration' in the planning process, meaning that planning authorities must consider the impact of any proposed development on the landscapes' special character'.

Conservation Areas

The City Walls and St Mary's Abbey Precinct Walls are within CYC's designated 'Conservation Area No.1: Central Historic Core'.

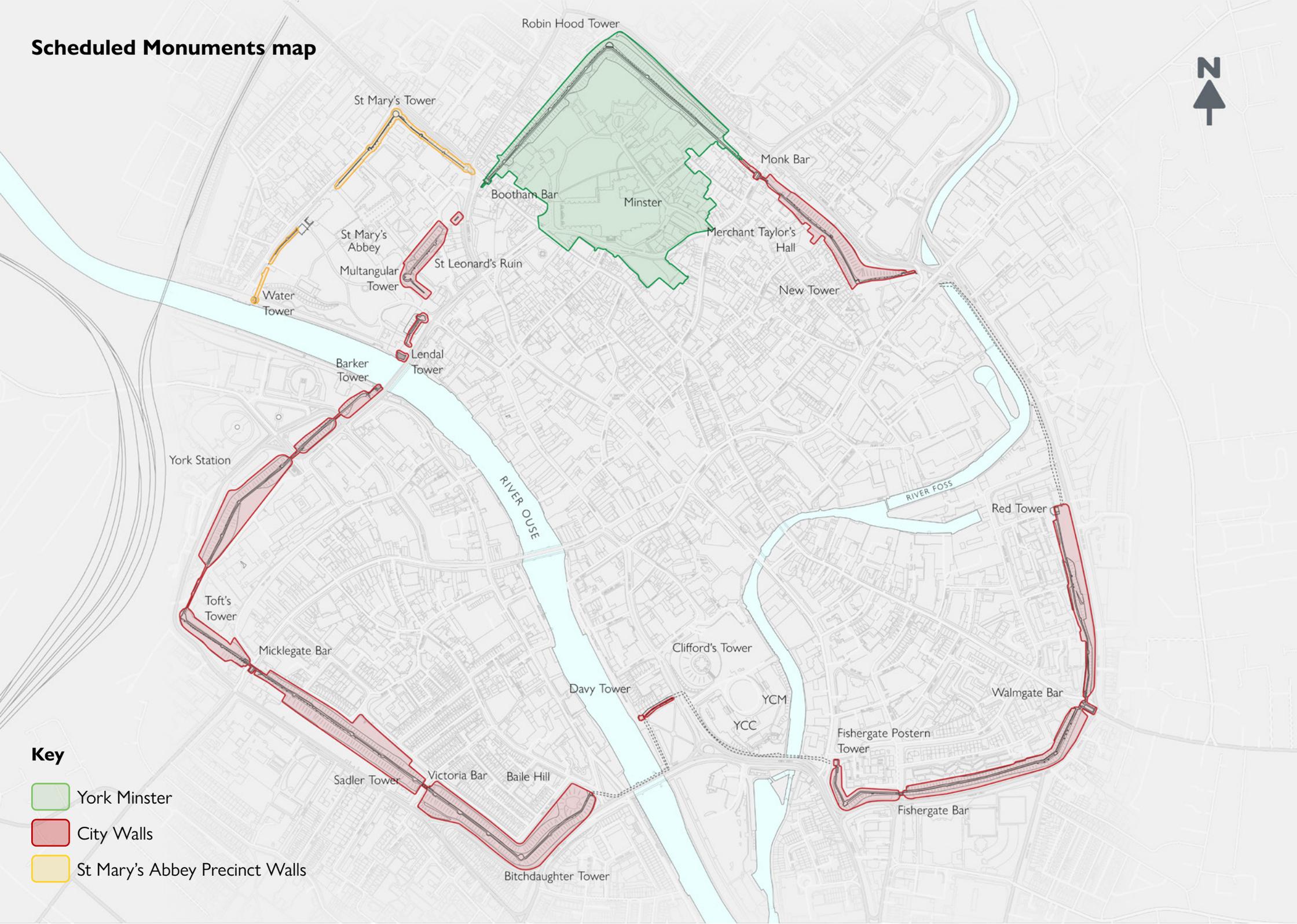
Link: <https://www.york.gov.uk/HCCAA>

Scheduled Monuments map



Key

-  York Minster
-  City Walls
-  St Mary's Abbey Precinct Walls



Relevant policy and guidance

The following is a very brief summary of the national planning policy relating to the historic environment. More detail can be found by following the the links provided in each section.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is required for most works and other activities that physically affect a scheduled monument. Carrying out an activity without consent is a criminal offence. Consent must be obtained from the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport through Historic England. If a scheduled monument is also a listed building, listed building consent is not required, however, planning permission may be required in addition to SMC for works, if they also amount to development which does not fall under permitted development rights.

York City Walls and St Mary's Abbey Precinct Walls have a Generic Scheduled Monument Consent in place, in agreement with Historic England which enables minor works on the walls to take place. Major restoration projects go through the normal consent process.

Link: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1979/46

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment.

Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local planning authorities which, with regard to listed buildings, require the planning authority to have 'special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses' and, in respect of conservation areas, that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

Link: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/contents

Listings map



Key

-  Grade I listed
-  Grade II* listed
-  Grade II Registered Park and Garden



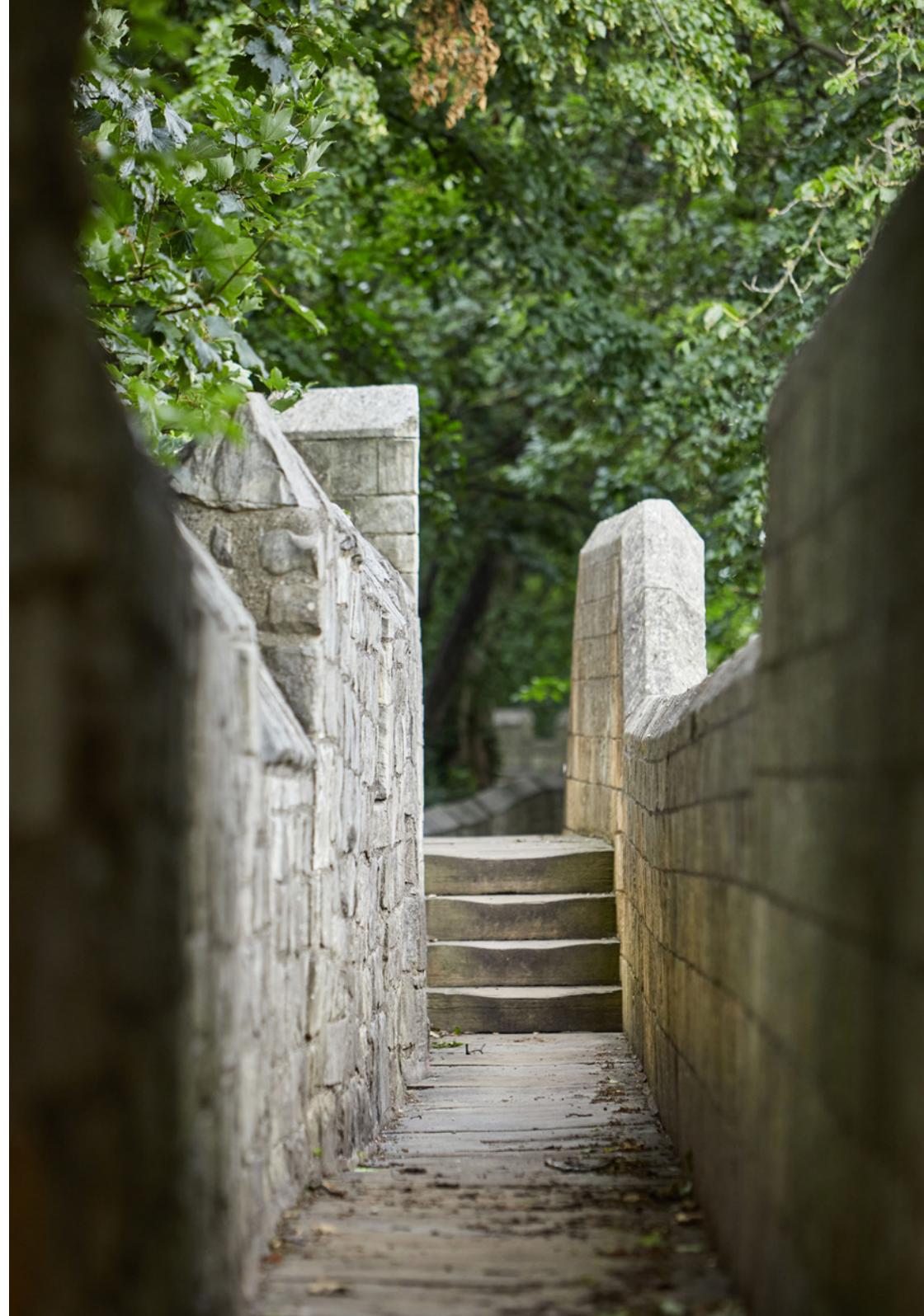
National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

Both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance are material considerations in relevant planning applications and all listed building consents. They do not apply to the consideration of scheduled monument consents but do apply to the consideration of all other permissions for activities that may affect scheduled monuments.⁷

The key message of the NPPF is the concept of ‘sustainable development’ which, for the historic environment, means that heritage assets ‘should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance’ and that ‘great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).’

Link: www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

⁷ Historic England: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/decisionmaking/nppf/>



6. Further information and important links

<https://www.york.gov.uk/CityWalls>

Link to CMP:

<https://www.york.gov.uk/CityWalls>

Contact CYC regarding the walls:

bar.walls@york.gov.uk

City of York HER Services:

<https://www.york.gov.uk/HistoricEnvironmentRecord>

Friends of York Walls website:

<https://www.yorkwalls.org.uk/>

York Walls Festival:

<https://yorkwallsfestival.org/>

For a summary history of the walls, see:

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/york/vol1>

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/york/vol2>



7. Bibliography

Earl. J. *Building Conservation Philosophy*, Routledge, 2003

Pevsner. N and Neave. D. *The Buildings of England. Yorkshire: York and the East Riding*, Yale University Press 2002.

Wilson C. and Burton J. *St Mary's Abbey York*, The Yorkshire Museum, 1988.





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