



# York Civic Trust

## **Inquiry into York's draft Local Plan: Phase 4**

### **Written Statement in connection with Matter 3 – Castle Gateway and York Central**

#### **Final Version**

**30<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

This statement in relation to Matter 3 – Castle Gateway and York Central is submitted by York Civic Trust. The Civic Trust is a membership organisation representing some 1300 individuals. Our vision is 'promoting heritage, shaping tomorrow'. Our Mission is to: protect and contemporise York's unique heritage; champion our environment and its sustainability; encourage the city's economic development in line with its character and engage with all sectors of the community.

This statement has been prepared by Andrew Morrison, Chief Executive and Prof Tony May, Chair of York Civic Trust's Environment Committee and other colleagues.

York Civic Trust is committed to helping to secure a Local Plan, based broadly on the current draft. We are concerned, however, that there are weaknesses in the way in which the Plan has been formulated, and aspects of its resulting content which render it unsound. We have endeavoured throughout the process to work with City of York Council to secure improvements which overcome these deficiencies. In June 2022 we prepared a Statement of Common Ground with the Council, which we understood had the Council's support, and which we expected to be signed and submitted in time for consideration in Phase 3. Two months later, and within two working days of the deadline for submitting statements for Phase 4, we finally received a suggested redraft, with no explanation. Regrettably, therefore, we have had to submit our draft of June 2022, as evidence of our good intent. We focus here on the areas which we suggest in that draft Statement still need to be resolved.

The Inspectors ask us to:

- Explain which part of the Plan is unsound;
- Explain why it is unsound, having regard to the Framework;
- Explain how the plan can be made sound; and
- Explain the precise/change/wording that is being sought.

We have endeavoured to do this, though where we have concerns over the process of plan making, we are clearly unable to answer the last of these.

### **Matter 3**

We have answered all three questions but, in connection with Question 3.3, for the Inspectors' convenience we have reiterated the observations on Policy SS4 which we made under Matter 4 of Phase 3 which are material when considering this question. In summary these concerned:

- Principle IX: lack of health and education facilities;
- Principle X: excess parking provision at York Station;
- Principle XII: inadequate public transport provision;
- Principle XIII: over-generous parking standards;
- Principle XIV: inappropriate retention of through traffic.

### **Question 3.1 Is the approach to Castle Gateway (ST20) in Policy SS5 a suitable one in heritage and other terms?**

We welcome the emphasis on 'high quality cultural, river and heritage assets that form part of York's unique character' and the use of the Historic Core Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2011) as an evidence base for this. However, within the detail of Policy SS5 heritage is very narrowly defined with references to Clifford's Tower forming most of the mention of heritage throughout the policy. There is no mention that Clifford's Tower is only one element of York Castle – the medieval and post-medieval remains of which completely form the sub-area *Castle and the Eye of York*. There is no mention of the intangible cultural history events within this sub-area that have equal international significance such as the Jewish Pogrom of AD 1190. Likewise, there is no mention of any form of heritage within the other four sub-areas which in many cases such as the Merchant Adventurer's Hall stand on an equal footing in terms of significance.

**York Civic Trust recommends that either each sub-area within the Area of Opportunity references the significant heritage assets and intangible events within their boundaries or there is a general clause added to Policy SS5 strengthening this aspect of the policy to ensure that any future development is aware of their significance.**

York Civic Trust welcomes City of York Council's recognition that the poor current setting negatively impacts the internationally significant cultural, river and heritage assets that form Castle Gateway. York Civic Trust has for over 30 years campaigned to have the Castle Car Park removed and the area converted to public realm conducive to appreciating and understanding the area.

York Civic Trust supports the overall purpose of the regeneration as set out and welcomes the primary goal to 'Radically enhance the setting of Clifford's Tower and other features within the Eye of York to recognise the significance of these historic assets and interpret their importance in York's history' (SS5).

York Civic Trust welcomes the sub-division of the Castle Gateway area into five specific sub-areas each taking a different approach recognising the individual character of each sub-area but has some concerns over each sub-area:

King's Staith/Coppergate - There is no reference to the King's Staith area as an historic street within the development principles for this sub-area. This is a serious omission and should be addressed. King's Staith and the Water Lanes from the River Ouse to Castlegate and the Castle Area are a significant aspect of the historic development of the form and character of Castle Gateway area and are currently overlooked.

**York Civic Trust recommends that the design principles for King's Staith/Coppergate sub-area are updated to include consideration of the King's Staith area.**

Piccadilly – York Civic Trust welcomes design principle V. 'Reduce the size of the vehicular carriageway on Piccadilly and improve the size and quality of the pedestrian foot streets, including tree planting.' We are deeply concerned over current plans that City of York Council are developing for Piccadilly which would be counter to this design principle. Neither design principle V. nor City of York Council's current development plans for Piccadilly contains reference to improved cycling provision.

**York Civic Trust recommends that design principle V. is strengthened to: 'Reduce the size of the vehicular carriageway on Piccadilly and improve the size and quality of the pedestrian foot streets, including tree planting and segregated cycling provision.'**

3.30 incorrectly states that there are 'three museums/attractions (Castle Museum, Fairfax House and the Jorvik Viking Centre) ... and a Scheduled Ancient Monument of International Significance (Clifford's Tower)'. In reality there are four museums (Castle Museum, Fairfax House, Jorvik Viking Centre and the York Army Museum) and three Scheduled Ancient Monuments (*Merchant's Hall* (1004888) and *St George's Medieval Chapel* (1020407) and *York Castle: motte and bailey castle, tower keep castle (including Clifford's Tower), and site of part of Romano-British fort-vicus and Anglian cemetery* (1011799)). Policy SS5 greatly underplays the heritage significance, diversity and appeal of the heritage of the Castle Gateway Allocation (ST5).

3.33 York Civic Trust welcomes the emphasis on heritage protection as paramount over the exploitation of heritage assets and the opportunity for the council to maximise planning gain. We would like to see the sentiment of this strengthened in Policy SS5 by replacing 3.33 with the addition of 'first and foremost' so that 3.33 reads 'A key challenge is to ensure that this important historic environment is safeguarded, first and foremost, whilst allowing stakeholders ...'

Fig. 3.4 Omits Tower Park from the overall boundary of Castle Gateway and in particular the sub-area The River Corridors – yet in Design Principle xxii specifically details 'Enhance the

existing public realm and consider new facilities at Tower Gardens to encourage better use of the space.'

**Question 3.2 Does Policy SS5 provide sufficient guidance for any development that might come forward as a result of the allocation?**

York Civic Trust has long supported the redevelopment of the York Central site, believing it to be a once-in-a-century opportunity, not only to develop the site itself but to provide York with a new quarter with transformational potential for the city.

York Civic Trust considers that York Central (ST5) offers many benefits to the city. The Civic Trust welcomes the decision, in principle, to provide 100,000 sqm of high-quality office space, and the provision of 1700 new homes (up to a maximum of 2500) will assist in alleviating the city's housing shortage. York Civic Trust supports the vision for York Central as set out in Para 3.24 and acknowledges that account will be taken of the special architectural or historic interest of the neighbouring conservation areas.

York Civic Trust supports the City of York Council's designation of Castle Gateway as an Area of Opportunity within the Draft Local Plan – however the lack of an Area of Opportunity Development Framework or a set of Design Principles or Objectives as other LPA's have included within their Local Plans weakens the allocation.

**York Civic Trust recommends that City of York Council provide a clear set of Design Principles or a Development Framework as part of the deliverables listed in Policy SS5 to inform the development of ST20 – 'Developing a clear set of Design Principles to inform the high quality development of public realm, transport infrastructure and new buildings.'**

**Question 3.3 Is Policy SS4 a sufficiently comprehensive guide for the redevelopment of York Central?**

York Civic Trust supports the ambition of York Central to create a high-quality and sustainable development that enhances and complements York as a city and so welcomes the design principles as set out in Policy SS4 with some modifications. However we do not believe that these design principles are sound in offering sufficient guidance for any development that might come forward as a result of the allocation?

**Principle iii** – Enhance the quality of the cultural area around the National Railway Museum through high quality public realm and improved connectivity to the wider city.

We believe that this Principle is too narrowly focused on high quality public realm specifically in connection with the National Railway Museum. As 'a new piece of the city' with 'exemplar mixed-use development' including 'a world-class urban quarter', York Central must deliver cultural opportunities and high-quality public realm everywhere within its boundaries. As a guide for redevelopment Principle iii is inadequate.

**York Civic Trust recommends the removal of the reference to ‘the cultural area around the National Railway Museum,’ and its replacement with ‘Enhance the cultural opportunities throughout York Central through ....’**

**Principle IX. Ensure provision of social infrastructure which meets the needs of York Central and, where viable, the wider city communities including sports, leisure, health, primary and nursery education, community facilities and open space**

The Outline Planning Application for York Central (18/01884/OUTM) contains little provision for social and communal infrastructure. There is an absence of health and education facilities for the site. The development’s own Environment Statement (Vol. 4 Non-Technical Summary, 6.14) states that the development ‘will put further demands on social infrastructure, including health and social care facilities, unless more is provided within or close to the Site’ and ‘[p]otentially moderate adverse effects could occur upon education provision’ (Vol.4 Non-Technical Summary, 6.8), with explicit exclusion of schools as part of the proposed floor space in York Central by category use (Development Specification, Revision A, Table 2.1). The lack of such provision and therefore the increased pressure placed upon the existing infrastructure is contrary to Development Principle IX.

**Principle X. Maximise the integration, connections and accessibility to/from the site including inter-modal connectivity improvements at York Railway Station**

The Outline Planning Permission for York Central (18/01884/OUTM) includes two new multi-storey car parks providing 1066 car park spaces for people wishing to drive into the city to access the station or visit the commercial area. By encouraging people to make car journeys into the city centre this development is contrary to Development Principles X, XIII, and XIV. We recommend that a substantial reduction in station parking should be sought, and those accessing the station redirected to park and ride sites with enhanced park and ride services provided to York Railway Station.

**Principle XII Demonstrate that all transport issues have been addressed, in consultation with the Council and Highways England as necessary, to ensure as many trips as possible are taken by sustainable travel modes and promote and facilitate modal shift from the car.**

York Central Partnership’s consultants predicted in 2019 that the proposal to allow all traffic to use the Access Road would create a flow through Museum Square of 1045 veh/h in peak hours, which is roughly equivalent to that on Gillygate, which is one of the most congested and polluted roads in York City Centre. The proposal to attract through traffic to use this new link is inconsistent with Policy T1, which requires new developments to demonstrate that (vi) “New roads or accesses through the development restrict access for, or otherwise discourage general motor traffic.” Such levels of traffic will impose severance within the residential community and between the NRM and the Station.

While we welcome the commitment to provide a high-quality cycle route through Leeman Road Tunnel, the consultants’ analysis indicates that alternate one-way operation for all

traffic on the other lane would impose delays of up to three minutes on southbound buses in both morning and evening peaks. Both flowing and standing traffic would significantly detract from the new area of high-quality public realm proposed for Museum Square.

The resultant congestion caused by this through traffic within ST5 and on the York Inner Ring Road could readily be addressed by the insertion of a bus gate at the Leeman Road Tunnel so that traffic through the tunnel is limited to buses, taxis, and appropriate local traffic. York Civic Trust, York Central Partnership and City of York Council formed an agreement in July 2020 to work together to consider all options for traffic passing through the Leeman Road tunnel. Unfortunately to date the Council have not agreed to commence this analysis, despite York Civic Trust's frequent requests to do so.

As noted earlier, documents CYC/87 and 87a present the results of the Council's assessment of the impacts of the Local Plan developments on the highway network, using the Council's new strategic model. We provide a fuller assessment of these documents in the annex and outline the implications for ST5 here. The tests conducted by the Council's consultants assess the combined impact of all developments proposed in the Local Plan. It is not therefore possible to isolate the impacts of the development of York Central. Moreover, base data for 2019 are not provided for the Leeman Road route through the site, so that it is not possible to assess any changes in travel times on that route because of the development.

Results are available for travel times on two routes which will be principally influenced by the York Central development. The first is Water End, immediately to the north of the site, where travel times are predicted to increase between 2019 and 2033, in the peak direction, by 55% in the morning peak and 68% in the evening peak. The second is the Inner Ring Road, which includes sections closer to and further from the site. Here peak period travel times are predicted to rise by between 11% and 19% between 2019 and 2033. It is clear, therefore, that the York Central development, without further mitigation measures, will be associated with an increase in congestion. We encourage the Inspectors to seek evidence on the potential for mitigating this impact in time for consideration at Phase 4 of the Inquiry.

York Civic Trust welcomes the ambition of Para. 3.27 *'Sustainable travel modes taking full advantage of the site's location will need to be maximised in order to limit impacts on the wider road network, congestion and air quality. Opportunities will be developed around pedestrian and cycle linkages, Park and Ride and bus service improvements.'* However, it notes that, under the York Central Partnership's proposal, the residential community in York Central would only be served by two or three buses per hour in each direction. This is incompatible with Policy T1. We argue that the residential area should be served by at least six buses per hour in each direction. This could easily be achieved by rerouting Park and Ride services (#2, 59) through York Central in both directions and providing stopping points within the residential area.

### **Principle XIII Minimise the environmental impact of vehicular trips**

York Civic Trust strongly believes that the environmental assessment for York Central is based on unsound information and analysis and should be reassessed to examine the impact of York Central on completion in 2033.

The approved Outline Planning Permission sets a standard of one parking space per 175 sq m which results in a requirement of 500 parking spaces for commercial office users. This is unduly generous by comparison with other developments. York Civic Trust suggests that at the most one space per 350 sq metres is more in keeping with Development Principle XIII in addition to reducing parking at York Railway Station and encouraging a greater use of Park and Ride services to access the Station.

**Principle XIV Ensure sustainability principles are embedded at all stages of the development.**

York Civic Trust's Sustainable Communities Report (Stevens 2021) and review of Derwenthorpe (Stevens 2022) concluded that sustainable communities should be designed to prevent through traffic. The current proposals for the Access Road clearly contravene this and Policy T1. We would like to see the need to restrict or remove through traffic explicitly incorporated into the principles in Policy SS4.