My York Central | Big Ideas, Principles and Vision

Summary of the ideas, principles and vision emerging from the My York Central Festival of York Central

**YORK CENTRAL PARTNERSHIP PRELUDE**

**How will the York Central Partnership use the My York Central summary?**

The following summary of feedback is being considered and discussed with YCP and the masterplanning team. It will help to refine and inform the masterplan and the various components of the planning application which is due to be submitted in August 2018.

In addition to the My York Central and wider stage 3 consultation feedback, YCP and the masterplanning team will consider the following:

* Further design work;
* Ongoing technical studies and assessments;
* Ongoing discussions with statutory consultees as part of the pre-application process; and
* Any subsequent targeted engagement as part of stage 4 of the planning application engagement process in advance of the submission of the application(s).

It is envisaged that these workstreams will assist YCP in progressing the following:

1. Refinement of the overarching vision and objectives for York Central.
2. Refinement and evolution of the indicative masterplan and further illustrative studies and materials.
3. Preparation of a set of planning application material which will inform the basis of the consent. As set out In the exhibition this is likely to include a development schedule (the uses and amounts of development proposed), parameter plans (plans showing the limits of proposed development such as heights and layouts of plots) and design guidance (a guidance document against which future detail planning applications will be assessed).
4. Identification of other topics of discussion which are outside of the remit of YCP or the current planning application. These will be shared with other organisations (e.g. City of York Council) as appropriate.
5. Considering the ongoing approach to engagement beyond the immediate planning application.

**Vision Background**

Over the six weeks of the Festival of York Central and York Central Exhibition at the National Railway Museum we’ve been exploring the plans and possibilities for York Central. Each week we produced Open Briefing documents. We have now drawn out and synthesized the discussions into a Vision for York Central, with a very short summary Big Ideas document, and a set of Principles of *how* York Central can be developed in the next stages.

This document has been drawn together from community engagement through the Festival of York Central, largely through:-

1. Feedback through Post-Its at the exhibition, photographed/uploaded/tagged on [our Flickr site](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/homesyorkcentral/).
2. Discussion at festival events, summarised through [a series of blogs](https://myyorkcentral.org/blog/) and informing a set of open briefing documents which were produced on the festival themes of open space, homes work and movement.
3. Other input via various meetings and workshops with specific groups (for example elected members, local schools, pop-ups, York Youth Council).
4. Contributions via conversations on the doorstep, via door-knocking carried out by local councillors and support teams.

**The purpose of this document**

Revisiting [the open briefing documents](https://myyorkcentral.org/category/open-briefs/) following the Festival, it was clear that while they largely captured the engagement during each of the themed weeks, there was still scope for a consolidating document which minimised duplication and built upon the links between the issues contained in the individual documents. For example the relationship between homes and movement is itself a key point and one which the two separate briefing documents doesn’t satisfactorily address. There were also over-arching principles which we wanted to give due prominence (for example sustainability) and others which – while central – hadn’t been part of the four weekly themes (for example heritage significance).

These ideas, principles and vision are not only for the York Central Partnership. Many are broader than the site and beyond the control of the Partnership. Therefore these ideas are for organisations across the city, community groups and individuals to work collaboratively to help make them happen.

**Big Ideas: York Central**

1. **Homes for living, not investment:** York Central should address York’s housing inequalities, make a mixed community and build homes not holiday lets.
2. **Exploit the benefits of high density:** High density should bring walkable access to shops, gyms, culture, entertainment, public transport and incredible roof top views. Identify these benefits collaboratively and design for them.
3. **Build in low running costs through high standards:** Link low fuel bills and environmental sustainability through high building standards.
4. **People, not cars:** Whether people love and rely on their cars or want to see a car free York, there is one shared point of agreement: that York Central cannot add 2500+ more cars to York’s roads. York Central should provide liveable streets and safe neighbourhoods for children to grow up, keep cars to the periphery, plan for quick and reliable public transport and prioritise direct routes for those on foot, bikes and with mobility aids.
5. **Beyond zoning:** Work is changing. Work and life are often no longer zoned into 9am-5pm so why should our cities be? Plan for creative vibrant urban space by mixing up work, living and cultural buildings and spaces.
6. **A community made through exchange:** York has enormous wealth, socially, culturally and financially. Use York Central to build a community that can build links between people to address inequalities through sharing and exchange.
7. **A hub that catalyses York’s creativity and innovation:** Amazing things are happening in York from media, science and technology and heritage. Develop a showcase and learning hub that challenges perceptions and fuels new ideas and networks.
8. **Public spaces that enable people to be collectively creative:** Design indoor and outdoor public space and forms of collaborative governance that enable communities to take ownership and to cultivate lots of different activities.

The Big ideas are summaries of ideas explored in more detail in the Vision.

**Key principles**

My York Central has identified the following key principles as central to the public engagement response. These should underpin all future thinking on the proposals by the Partnership and other relevant organisations and groups across the City.

1. **Ongoing community engagement:** For broad and open ongoing community engagement with the development process. The broad and open approach should also shape as far as possible the decision-making processes.
2. **Identify issues and collaboratively develop solutions:** For community engagement to be based upon a continuity of conversation which allows for consideration of options, viability issues and creative design – in short a “grown-up conversation” where there is an invitation both to identify issues and to co-design solutions.
3. **Shaped by future aspirations not current norms:** For the development on York Central to be bold and innovative, shaped by hopes and expectations for future urban living rather than current norms.
4. **York Central as a lever for city-wide change:** For the development to be a lever for change across the city as a whole and to move forward in parallel with review and implementation of a widely-supported local plan.
5. **A social contract for York Central:** For York Central to be developed in ways which spreads benefit, is underpinned up the city’s human rights ethos and is used to creatively address inequalities.

**York Central as an integrated part of York**

The development of York Central should bring to York elements which it needs to function better as a whole – it should [“add something extra”](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/addsomethingextrayorkcentral/) and avoid harmful impact on existing elements of the city.

* **Thinking City Wide:** Looking at patterns of life and work within the city as a whole, and how these can be helped to function better. How will York Central fit into a broad process of improving our current [housing](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/homesyorkcentral/) provision? What do we do well economically and [how can York Central strengthen the city’s economy](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/economyyorkcentral/) and provide new opportunities? How can York Central’s [transport infrastructure](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/movementyorkcentral/) help to shape city-wide integration and improvements in sustainability? So, if a broad, seamless public transport network is required to give an appealing alternative to car ownership, should we be looking at a “Transport for York” umbrella body in order to shape and coordinate it?
* **Combining different ways of knowing *for change***: Gathering and combining different [information](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/evidenceyorkcentral/) in more subtle ways. This means, for example, combining transport modelling with people’s own sense of their future behaviour. Yet this needs to be done not just as “knowing about: the current situation, it should be part of an active process which allows us to openly ask “what-if” and to consider change.
* **Heritage as creativity and innovation:** For the development to be informed by the past – of the city as a whole and of the site itself – but for this heritage significance (why the past matters in the present) to shape the development in creative and exciting ways.

**A New Community on York Central**

York Central is not just built form and space. There are examples in York where recent new developments are devoid of life and culture. [The planning process](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/planningyorkcentral/) needs to move beyond simply allocating land for development within a rational 3D structure. Placemaking needs to consider the narrative of the future place and to engage with people and society. This needs to be part of both the process and the physical form.

The process and form of development needs to provide for the lives that local people want to create there for themselves. Ongoing opportunities for them to shape and re-shape both the physical form (buildings and spaces) and the [governance and financial structures (ownership and economy)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/governanceyorkcentral/) need to be built into planning. The development should allow for how people want to live, not just reflect what we have done in recent decades.

* **Inspiring ideas that open up possibilities:** We should look for [inspiration](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/inspiringyorkcentral/) and [practice elsewhere](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/goodpracticeyorkcentral/) (for example [Freiburg Vauban](https://www.itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/26.-092211_ITDP_NED_Vauban.pdf) and [Heidelberg Bahnstadt](http://www.c40.org/case_studies/the-bahnstadt-project-in-heidelberg)) for creative ways to deal with the management of car use and how this impacts on built form and the lives of inhabitants.
* **Creating a community to bring the York Central community into being:** We should be prepared to question accepted wisdom in respect of what brings value and marketability to development and should give consideration to the process of “buying in” to a type of community (in the way it has worked at Derwenthorpe). So, the basis for decision-making on car use/ownership should move from whether we dare deviate from the status quo (“most people have cars, so we design residential areas for cars since moving away from this would result in resistance”) towards consideration of [alternative possibilities](https://www.itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/26.-092211_ITDP_NED_Vauban.pdf) (“there must be lots of people for whom a [car-free neighbourhood](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/carfreeyorkcentral/) this close to the centre would command higher house prices”).
* **Community-Led Approaches to Development:** We should ensure routes for a wide variety of tenures and built form, [through community-led homes](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/communityledyorkcentral/), investigation of CLT models and other innovative routes. This process should also investigate long-term affordability and how this can be ensured.
* **Positive benefits of high density through co-design:** We should explore a range of models for family housing which go well beyond “a house with a garden” and look at the benefits of higher density and high-quality shared facilities. One comment was that downsizing to a flat in York Central would only be a possibility if it was very, very nice. So, people considering downsizing or moving to York Central should be involved in briefing and designing for that quality.
* **Real and long term affordability:** [Affordability was a key issue](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/affordablehomesyorkcentral/) during the community engagement process. Many people question the official definition of ‘affordable’ and called for [greater ambitions](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/socialhousingyorkcentral/) in targets. York Central may not be able to “cure” York’s housing affordability problem, but is can demonstrate a methodology to start to address it.
* **Public space which serves purposes:** Home extends beyond the front door, and public space must be thought of as a key shaping tool in creating neighbourhoods, both spatially and in terms of social value. Public space must balance being truly public, with encouraging “[ownership](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/ownershipyorkcentral/)” by neighbours and users. There should be a continuum of types of space from [playstreets](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/liveablestreetsyorkcentral/) to hard-surfaced [urban shared space](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/publicspaceyorkcentral/), gardens and [parkland to wilder areas](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/greenspaceyorkcentral/) which encourage [wildlife](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/wildlifeyorkcentral/). Public space does not, importantly, all have to be at ground level.

**Mixed and Thriving York Central**

Affordability (of housing and space for commerce) should facilitate the growth of a mixed community, one where a local economy can thrive with links to the city as a whole.

* **Mixed uses for a vibrant York Central:** [The need to zone](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/againstzoningyorkcentral/) commercial development away from housing was questioned and there was much discussion about whether a vibrant urban area needs [mixed development](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/mixeddevelopmentyorkcentral/) and [mixed uses](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/mixeduseyorkcentral/). One quote was to [“think 3D”](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/27090401268/in/album-72157689055716310/) – suggesting there might be benefits in having shops, social and commercial at ground level, offices at first floor and flats above to avoid the ‘ghost town’ effect and drive life in the public realm.
* **Living + Working**: [We should question the need to zone or separate living and working](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/mixeddevelopmentyorkcentral/) strictly. Many small-ish creative businesses are both good neighbours to each other (as they often collaborate) and also good neighbours to other uses – including residential – as they create little nuisance. In fact there were benefits in having the kind of activity throughout the day and night that happens when work and homes are linked.
* **Ways to contribute beyond work:** Many people the future will simply not have jobs and they will be looking for creative ways of spending time and contributing and the design of the city should facilitate this, again pointing towards a mixed environment rather than one where work and homes are strictly zoned. There could be exciting possibilities for [older residents](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/retiredyorkcentral/) wishing to have the option of inclusion within economic life, with the option to “invest” capital or time (or both) in neighbourhood economic activity.
* **Graduates need affordable housing too:** Keeping graduates is seen as crucial to growing York’s own talent. Without affordable places to both live and work, graduates will be unable to afford to take necessary business risks, and there will be too great a hurdle to jump in terms of getting starts ups happening. [Affordable housing](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/affordablehomesyorkcentral/) is not *just* a “housing” issue, but has an impact on [economic activity](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/economyyorkcentral/).

The new community on York Central will be dynamic. From the simple fact of long-term development (a scheme which may take 20 years of more to complete) through to uncertainties about future trends in transport or employment, the process and physical form should “leave open doors” for different narratives and opportunities. So, for example:-

* **Open Source Planning:** A popular idea from David Rudlin’s talk on [Grow Your Own Garden City](https://myyorkcentral.org/2018/04/09/david-rudlin-grow-your-own-garden-city-uxcester-and-york/) was [open source planning](https://issuu.com/conservatives/docs/opensourceplanning) where a planning authority could pre-approve a variety of possible uses for people’s homes so they could turn them easily into small scale workspaces (open a hairdresser / set up an office).
* **Neighbourhood Planning?:** This is an issue which leads immediately to consideration of Neighbourhood [Planning](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/planningyorkcentral/) – what will be the status of York Central, and how will neighbourhood planning issues be dealt with as the community develops?

**Learning and Working on York Central**

Through the public engagement process it became clear that the nature of York’s educational and commercial infrastructure – with two universities and a hugely successful creative industry network – offered opportunities to consciously build new physical and organisational structures which would drive a new phase of economic and cultural development. This would be a high-density mixed development within walking distance of the station (and sufficiently compact to be largely walkable within) where people could live and work.

* **Build for local business growth:** It was also clear that there is a need both for provision for new businesses (supported shared space or incubator provision) and medium-sized [growing businesses](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/businessyorkcentral/) (10-12+ staff) in order for existing networks of interdependence to develop and grow.
* **Large employers – but not as a primary driver:** This does not rule out new [larger employers](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/employeryorkcentral/) moving in to York Central, but it suggests that these incomers should not be the primary drivers in terms of the shaping of development.

Another issue which has been highlighted by the community engagement process is that of drawing creative contributions (whether formal or informal, paid or unpaid) together.

* **Plan for community-led activity:** As seen in the [The Life Sized City film series](https://myyorkcentral.org/2018/03/16/the-life-sized-city-screenings/), community initiatives can make use of unused or under-used urban space to [bring activities that would otherwise be excluded](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/flexibleyorkcentral/) by strict zoning. York Central should be a place where there are always exciting and creative things going on.
* **Hubs for activity**: This requires [spaces where things could happen](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/cultureyorkcentral/) and would include places which could provide venues for lunchtime talks and films, places for broader thinking and debate open to all. Libraries were often seen as “anchors” for this type of activity but it has a breadth which goes [well beyond the conventional definition](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/venuesyorkcentral/).
* **Provide creative space for young people**: Various bodies including Explore York already provide [creative opportunities for young people](https://www.exploreyork.org.uk/event/muse-hack-3-0/2018-05-28/) but these could be expanded within a richer infrastructure which includes local creative practitioners and the universities.

**A Social Contract for York Central: Spreading benefits, underpinned by human rights and creatively addressing inequalities**

York Central should build upon York’s tradition of pioneering development (with New Earswick, radical 1940’s housing and JRHT’s Derwenthorpe) to ensure a new community which addresses human rights and inequalities. Processes of development should ensure wherever possible that houses become homes rather than [investments](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Chelengraham%5CDocuments%5CAHRC%20CODESIGN%20personal%5CMy%20Future%20York%20project%5CYork%20Central%20Ideas%20Dec%202017%5Cbuytoletyorkcentral). Affordable public transport should ensure that access across the city is available to all, and as far as is possible at all times. Creative approaches could be developed to enable intergeneration ‘circular economy’ exchanges of resources of time, expertise and capital.

* **A “Social Contract” to spread benefit:** Careful consideration of [the process of development in relation to neighbouring communities](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/fairyorkcentral/) and implementation of a “social contract” which allows existing communities to benefit from, and contribute to, York Central itself. For example can community infrastructure be located where the development meets existing communities – or even within those existing communities – to forge links and ensure a fair distribution of benefits of investment? How might community-led development approaches enable people to share time, expertise and financial resources to open up shared benefit.
* **Prioritise pedestrians and cycle users:** Transport infrastructure should reflect the agreed hierarchy of priorities in York where there are rewarded for those choosing not to use cars. This means [good, direct routes for pedestrians](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/walkyorkcentral/), those with specific [mobility needs](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/disabledyorkcentral/) and [cycle users](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/cycleyorkcentral/). Space is always limited but planning should ensure these highest priorities are allocated adequate space, [minimising the conflicts which occur](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/segregatedyorkcentral/) (for example between pedestrians and cycle users) when space is cramped. Routes for pedestrians and cycle users should be safe at all times and in all seasons.
* **Playful and social streets:** Transport infrastructure should be designed to facilitate the safe use of public realm by everyone. Car movement and parking should not impinge upon use of streets for [play or social activity](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/playyorkcentral/). All streets adjacent to homes or separating homes from green space should be “liveable streets”.
* **Sustainability and affordability should go hand in hand:** Quality of construction and environment should benefit everyone. Equally-high [standards of energy-efficiency](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/lowcarbonyorkcentral/) should apply throughout, so that those in most need have low fuel bills and avoid fuel poverty, and high standards of construction should protect all from noise nuisance. Low car use should ensure good [air quality](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/airqualityyorkcentral/) throughout.
* **Community benefit – for existing and new communities:** The entire development should be designed so that investment benefits existing neighbouring [communities](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myyorkcentral/tags/communityyorkcentral/). Overall connectivity improvements should balance any additional burdens imposed by incoming population (residential or commercial). The overall value of the development should always be the guide in respect of viability of provision of community benefit. This takes us back to the idea that York Central should be guided by a ‘social contract’ that benefits new users of the area, bordering communities and indeed the whole city.

**YORK CENTRAL PARTNERSHIP ANNEXE**

**Planning application engagement context**

Since late 2017, York Central Partnership have developed opportunities for the public to engage with, and input into, the proposals as they have developed as follows:

* Stage 1 - YCP met with local groups and organisations and held three public pop-up events to hear thoughts on the emerging principles for the York Central masterplan.
* Stage 2 - YCP held a series of workshops with members of the community to discuss key themes for the emerging York Central masterplan. The workshops allowed YCP to explore issues raised in Stage 1 in greater detail which has helped to progress key elements of the masterplan.
* Stage 3 – The Festival of York Central - a comprehensive process involving an exhibition and dedicated website, as well as a series of events and activities to promote deeper understanding and engagement. This six week process finished on 29 April 2018.

**Purpose of stage 3** – **Festival of York Central**

Following a focused and intensive period of design work, technical studies and engagement with local people over the past six months, YCP identified five main objectives for the stage 3 engagement:

1. Provide a clear overview of how the emerging masterplan is evolving.
2. Hear your views on the overall approach, vision and key principles.
3. Understand your thoughts on more speciﬁc elements of the proposals including site access and open spaces.
4. Deepen the level of involvement and understanding of the site through conversation and dialogue to enable long term community involvement in the site as it evolves.
5. Enable a masterplan that better meets the needs of the York community.

**My York Central – Background Context**

During Stage 1, respondents asked YCP to look at the My Castle Gateway project as a best-practice example of good engagement. The same team created My York Central (MYC). MYC goes beyond conventional community consultation by enabling all those interested to become part of a sustained long-term conversation where influence comes through sharing responsibility for the area and its future. Throughout the festival MYC has worked to make getting involved active, challenging and fun.

The purpose of this note is to summarise the feedback and discussions which took place through the events and activities which took place through the My York Central process alongside the exhibition. It is important to note that responses were also received via the Commonplace platform and main project website, and hard copy questionnaires.